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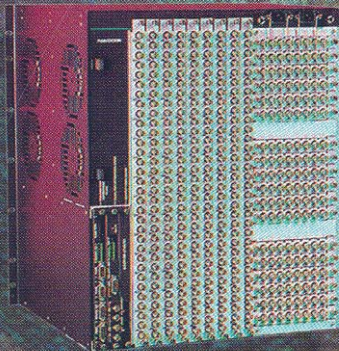
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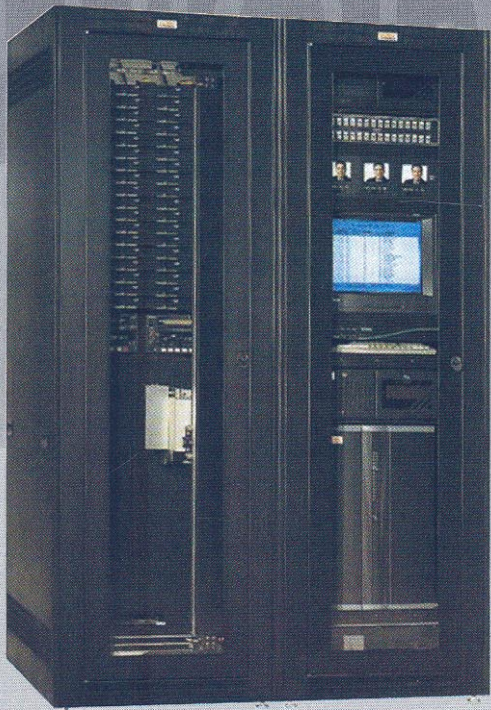
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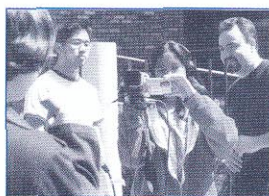
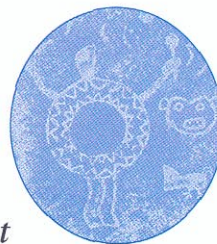
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As the journal of the Alliance for Community Media, COMMUNITY MEDIA REVIEW shall support the Alliance mission by providing: a comprehensive overview of past, present and future issues critical to the Alliance and its membership; vigorous and thoughtful debate on those issues; and a venue for members and like-minded groups to present issues critical to the Alliance.

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10% of Bandwidth Is All We Ask

BY **BUNNIE RIEDEL**

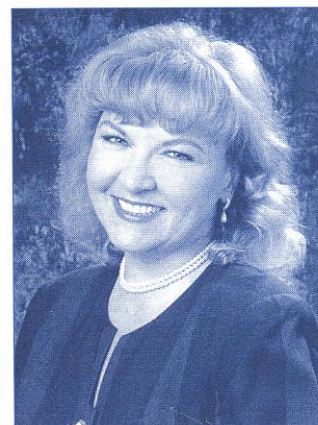
Over the past four years as I have served as executive director of the Alliance for Community Media, the pace of media merger and consolidation has been stunning. The latest news of the Comcast bid to buy AT&T cable is just one example of how the industry has changed. The bid certainly speaks to the success of Comcast as a company (and for that they should be congratulated) but it once again raises fundamental issues. Even media mogul Ted Turner recently bemoaned the fact that we are soon going to have only two or three cable operators in this country.

We are all asking ourselves how this consolidation will affect our communities. Will we see standardized, one-size-fits all, franchise agreements? Will the power of these mega-companies threaten our existence? How will the public interest be served by single-source communications? Will democratic discourse be limited?

As media consolidation has grown I have witnessed the growth of the importance of community media. More and more municipalities are opening Public, Educational and Government (PEG) access facilities. More and more municipalities are going to the mat to make sure that the voice of the community and the important information provided by community media is heard and seen.

Added to what PEG does by "providing" information is the growing capability we will have for "facilitating" multi-path communication. With the advent of broadband comes new, exciting possibilities for every part of our work. One area I am most excited about is how broadband will expand educational opportunities. Broadband will allow students at all levels to have real-time video, voice and data interaction with instructors and other students. These will be virtual classrooms that provide a real classroom environment. Educational access practitioners across the country have been using this kind of technology for some time, but broadband will guarantee that this becomes widespread and common.

We have barely scratched the surface on what we will be able to accomplish in the public interest through the application of new technologies. The greatest threat we face is whether or not we will have the bandwidth set-aside we will need...Ten percent is all we ask.



We have barely scratched the surface on what we will be able to accomplish in the public interest through the application of new technologies. The greatest threat we face is whether or not we will have the capacity set-aside that we will need. For instance, when the state of Vermont required cable operators to provide up to 10 percent of broadband capacity, they secured a future for the growth of public interest applications. We need to make sure that every franchise agreement includes at least 10 percent of the bandwidth capacity for PEG. Whether we can accomplish this through local negotiations or we need federal relief remains to be seen. But we have to make sure that we aren't relegated to a "digital Siberia" (as Vermont stated it) and we aren't identified as strictly a video environment (which is what the Tauzin-Dingell legislation will do).

Much of this is going to require our being "heard" by the cable industry and these large media corporations. We need to demonstrate that providing our communities with capacity will create a win-win situation for all of us, including the cable operators. There is no way cable operators can meet the needs of a community with as much cost-efficiency as PEG access does. Nor can operators provide the wide-range of services PEG access does. Imagine being a cable operator and finding yourself in the position of having to deliver Government, Educational and Public programming. Just visualizing having to staff such an

endeavor sets my head spinning.

We bring a lot to the table, in terms of capability, existing infrastructure and expertise. Ultimately we save cable operators tremendous amounts of time, energy and money and that can only be good for the bottom line. And we provide the bridge between the operator and the community that is so important. We facilitate their ability to communicate and to reach diverse audiences and we create good will among their customers.

While much has changed in the last few years, there is a consistent need for building a healthy partnership with the cable industry, especially as the number of companies continues to diminish. Communities will demand more accountability from these large concerns and we will stand as a shining example of what can be accomplished when companies practice good corporate citizenship.

PEG access is leading the way in developing new and exciting uses for emerging technologies. We will continue to innovate, create and educate as long as we have the foresight to make sure that we reserve the bandwidth we will need. For those of you who joined us on Capitol Hill this summer for the rally, you will recall that "10% is All We Ask!"

Bunnie Riedel is executive director of the Alliance for Community Media. Contact her at briedel@alliancecm.org

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Unraveling the Paradox in Community Media

BY RIC HAYES

Once again the guest editors of the *CMR* have selected a topic that hits home for every access center. Regardless of what kind of community channel you operate, at some point every access manager is asked the question "how many people are watching?"

The role of the viewer to our channels is a paradox. On the one hand the primary reason we exist is to give a voice to the voiceless, to enable the citizen to exercise their right to free speech. On the other hand we conscientiously schedule these community channels with alternative programming based on the belief that someone is out "there" watching.

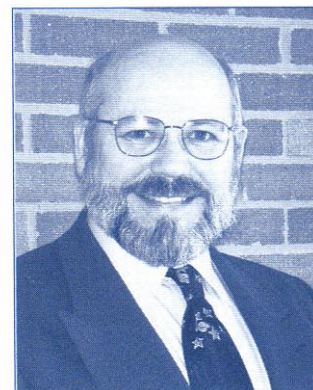
The paradox has its roots in the fact that community media is more than television, it is also about what happens during the production process. It's the value of the experiences that people have along the way that is the hidden treasure. Although we have a close working relationship directly with the producers, making a connection with those on the other side of the screen remains a challenge to us all. But that's not the subject of this piece.

No, when I thought of viewership surveys I got to thinking about what are the common elements that successful access centers share? Surely an active and involved viewership is part of it. But how is that maintained (or developed) and what are the key traits of a successful access center?

This is on my mind because of my new job. I have spent the last six months working with a new board of directors to design and create a PEG access center in the town of Ventura, California. The community had worked hard for the previous three years and had laid the groundwork for the creation phase. Many of the tasks were not as difficult as they might have been if careful preparation and community ascertainment had not come before.

Consider all the thousands of decisions that have to be made to establish a viable access center. There are more than I can list here, designing operating policies and procedures, designing production systems and selecting the equipment,

The paradox has its roots in the fact that community media is more than television, it is also about what happens during the production process. It's the value of the experiences that people have along the way that is the hidden treasure.



developing a philosophy to underlie program scheduling, designing a training and volunteer program. Throw in a membership process and facility planning and you have a considerable to do list.

As each of the decisions are made you strive to make the choice that will create the processes in just the right way that will enable the entire community to come together and produce a vital organization that delivers this unique community service.

Those of us working in community media today are very lucky because there is an abundance of resources available to provide guidance. These include publications that the Alliance creates to answer a need in the access community. There is the *Access Startup Manual*, a salary survey, a *Copyright Manual*, and of course the *Community Media Resource Directory* with approximately 500 listings of PEG access centers throughout America and abroad. All these publications are listed for distribution on the Alliance website at www.alliancecm.org.

Another resource is the quarterly *Community Media Review* where each issue is crafted to cover significant aspects of the access phenomenon. And one major creation, which anyone interested in community media should own, is the 25th issue of the *CMR*. This compilation reviews the history of access and contains articles which challenge us to consider the next 25 years.

Another resource is the various list serves that are hosted by the Alliance and related supporting groups. In this formless ether we make connections with each other and develop virtual communities

seeking to improve the work we do and provide the most successful service to our communities. This virtual world serves as an interactive encyclopedia where you can post a question and within minutes begin to get responses from the access community across the country. Whether it's how to handle the transition to digital technology or how to design your operating rules, the dialogue that ensues can be a vital guide.

Another set of resources are the web sites of the access centers themselves. Finding the addresses of the websites has been made easier thanks to the work of Rob McCausland of Boston Neighborhood Network, who has created a listing of access center homepages from around the country. The link www.world.std.com/~rghm is also made available on the front page of the Alliance website. Once you pick a center's site you can visit the virtual offices of thousands of access centers, many of whom have posted major aspects of their organization's existence; from operating rules to bylaws to virtual tours of their media centers.

But that is not all, let's not forget the opportunity of attending training seminars at regional and national conferences. Which also provides the ability to make direct contact with people from access centers facing similar issues. All in all we are indeed fortunate to be working in access at a time when we have so much to offer each other.

Ric Hayes is chairman of the Alliance for Community Media and executive director of Community Access Partners of San Buenaventura, CA. Contact him at rhayes48@yahoo.com.



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PEG Access, born primarily as a participation medium for the producer, still remains producer-oriented. As a result, audiences take a backseat in our priorities, in our slogans, and in our thinking about what we do. Sure, we worry about whether anyone is watching, and we might even undertake surveys to find out who and how many. We publish program guides and do what we can to connect producers with people who might want to watch their shows. But audiences are often the great under-analyzed component of PEG Access: we assume that we know them, or we take them for granted, or we ignore them altogether.

In this issue, we would like to shift the focus from production to explore what happens at the other end of the cable. We may even discover that there is more to learn about PEG Access audiences. To begin our search, **Laura Linder** summarizes various audience surveys that access centers conducted over the years, updating work that appeared in her recent book, *Public Access*

Television: America's Electronic Soapbox. **Robin Gee** offers some new information on audience relation-

ship-building for our channels: positioning the channels to fit the psyche of the viewer and utilizing non-profit organizations to create an audience. **Pat Garlinghouse** follows up with an article on how a local access center might conduct a survey: what to expect and what to look for.

In considering how we think about audiences, **Bill Kirkpatrick** offers his thoughts on audiences as cultural agents who make use of television in unpredictable ways. **Stuart Heady** contributes two perspectives: a meditation on television as an electronic campfire, and an exploration of audiences as constituencies. **Brad Clark** applies similar ideas to multiple audiences for government access, including the idea of taking access programming online.

To put all of this knowledge and analysis to practical use, check out **Paul Congo's** suggestions for programming, promotion and product distribution strategies at your local center that are sure to develop more audiences. **Barbara Popovic** makes a strong case for centers to be more proactive in connecting audiences to the values that access promotes.

Last, but in no way least, **Brenda Trainor** describes a brand new coalition of broadband service providers that can open up new opportunities, services and audiences for PEG Access.

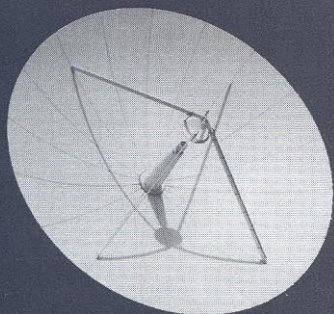
We thank all the contributors who gave so generously of their time and expertise. Our job was easy thanks to your commitment to the Alliance mission. Special thanks go to **Wita Duran** who continues to provide great photos for the cause! Our hope is that the various perspectives about audiences will inspire new thinking and approaches toward developing PEG Access services that create audiences of the future.

– Pat Garlinghouse and Bill Kirkpatrick

Pat Garlinghouse discovered access in 1986 as a public access producer. She joined the staff at ACTV, Austin, Texas in 1989 and later became its executive director. She now serves as executive director of Houston MediaSource, Houston, Texas.

Bill Kirkpatrick studies and teaches at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. He occasionally cablecasts for Madison's public access station, WYOU, and also serves on the city's Broadband Telecommunications Regulatory Board. He is currently working on a dissertation about alternative media.

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Who Watches Public Access Television?

MEASURING THE AUDIENCE: A SURVEY OF SURVEYS

BY LAURA R. LINDER

Who watches public access television? Those of us involved in public access television know that people watch: we hear from them almost daily. But hard data is difficult to come by since there is no equivalent of Nielsen or Arbitron ratings for public access television. Any information about viewership exists in the form of community surveys. In a February 11, 1996 *Boston Globe* story about the growing awareness of community television, Beth Daley reported that a market analysis was done for the Winthrop business community and showed that 76 percent of the residents watch the public access channel.¹

Several surveys completed since 1973 have demonstrated an increasing awareness of public access television and an increase in viewership.² (See Figure 1) In 1985, as part of her doctoral dissertation, Margaret Hardenbergh examined the producers, content, and audiences of four public access channels in Connecticut to determine how well they fulfilled their objective of providing an alternative to commercial television. The study concluded that, to varying degrees, the public access channels functioned as a "mini-medium," presenting content "not normally covered by the mass media." The survey also determined that half the population had watched public access, with 30 percent able to recall a particular program, and that most turned to public access because of the content. Ironically, the Hardenbergh study found that one of the factors limiting unique programming was the pressure that many producers put on themselves "to produce traditional television content in terms of production style."³

A national survey conducted by ELRA Group showed in 1986 that almost 19 percent of cable viewers had watched public access television within the previous week. As Atkin and LaRose report: "Community channels do, however, perform consistently better than such satellite-delivered channels as BET, C-SPAN, Financial News Network, PTL, and SPN. (See Figure 2 next page) They can even match the performance of Arts & Entertainment (A&E), CBN [now The Family Channel] and Lifetime at certain times."⁴

In research conducted for another doctoral dissertation in 1987, Christopher F. White contacted 425 cable subscribers in Austin, Texas and interviewed them regarding their viewing habits. Of the polled subscribers, 43 percent said that they had watched some programming on public access, although viewing was generally light. Not surprisingly, viewers of public access were also frequent viewers of programming on PBS and A&E. More significantly in terms of the mission of public access, White also found that subscribers who viewed public access exhibited higher levels of community involvement than those who did not.⁵

Survey results published in 1990 by the National

Clearinghouse for Community Cable Viewership Research at Western Michigan University indicate that 30 million homes had public access channels on their cable system. This translates into approximately 70 million viewers and almost 75 percent were aware of the public access channels.⁶

There is also anecdotal evidence that suggests that the impact of public access is growing steadily. In the small community of Cape May County, New Jersey, a half-hour special program on school overcrowding was repeated three times daily for two weeks leading up to a \$1.1 million bond referendum.

Figure 1. Studies of awareness of public access television.

LOCATION	YEAR	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	% AWARE OF PUBLIC ACCESS	% WHO WATCH
New York City	1973	250	30	30 *
Columbus, IN	1974	643	N/A	2 *
Manhattan, NY	1978	400+	50+	33 **
Longmeadow, MA	1983	428	94	45 **
Milwaukee, WI	1986	226	51	36 *
Raleigh, NC	1988	400	76	58 *
Sacramento, CA	1991	408	67	67 *

* watch occasionally

** watch regularly

SOURCES: Linda K. Fuller, *Community Television in the United States*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994, 12-15; and David Atkin and Robert LaRose, "Cable Access: Market Concerns Amidst the Marketplace of Ideas," *Journalism Quarterly* 68 (Fall 1991): 356-358.

Producer Lenora Boninfante credited the program for both a huge turnout (more than 55 percent of voters cast ballots) and the passage of the referendum by a 2-1 margin.⁷ Numerous candidates across the country have cited public access as a factor in increasing name recognition, especially when fighting a better-known and better-funded incumbent.

According to the Atkin and LaRose study, although the people who watch public access television are among the better educated, "heavy access viewers are nevertheless likely to be older, retired, and have lower incomes." The study goes on to say that "[a]ccording to the criterion for rating success among cable services, where a rating of 2-4 percent is considered strong, access channels nevertheless seem to be able to hold their own against the competition. Judging purely on the basis of audience viewership and satisfaction, it would seem that community channels have earned a place on the cable roster. That these channels can outperform more lavishly produced basic services should also establish their market value to cable operators."⁸

The profile of the average public access viewer is close to that of CNN. The audience for public access television tends to be fairly well-educated, involved, and leaning to the liberal side of the political scale. They are generally people who are interested in their community and are looking for more local informa-

tion—information that can be difficult to come by on the network affiliates. But to find out more information about these viewers, community media activists must do their own research, conduct their own surveys, and spread the word.

A good example of this type of research occurred in the summer of 1997 in Guilford County, North Carolina. Greensboro Community Television undertook a survey of county residents to assist in the community ascertainment process as part of the renewal of the county cable contract with Time Warner Enterprises. The purpose of the survey was to determine the level of interest and support for or against expanding public access television into the county franchise area; an extra bonus was that information about viewership could be gathered as well.

A telephone survey was chosen because it allowed for maximum return on limited resources. The survey instrument was designed, pre-tested on a committee of volunteers, and then revised and shortened. Volunteers were used to conduct the telephone survey. They were provided with an orientation, an instruction sheet, questions and answers, and a script to follow. Over the course of the survey, which took seven weeks, 13 individual volunteers collected data. The sample came from the 1996 Greensboro-High Point Cross-Reference Directory, published by City Publishing Company of Independence, Kansas, and available at the public library. This index provides names and telephone numbers by street. A list of county cable subscribers was not available, so sampling techniques involved a laborious process of identifying neighborhoods that were more likely to have cable and which were not. A type of modified stratification was attempted by drawing lists of neighborhoods from the more heavily populated areas in all quadrants of the county. Greensboro, High Point, and Jamestown areas were avoided since they are covered by franchise agreements with Time Warner that are not undergoing renegotiation. No attempt was made to target certain streets within the population centers over others.

Volunteers were provided with photocopied lists of numbers that had been culled on this basis from the index. While this sample is not drawn strictly according to scientific sampling technique, it adheres as closely to the principles of randomness that time and budget restrictions allowed.

The franchise area for Guilford County contains 22,000 households. Surveying a population of that size at a 90 percent reliability rate requires a minimum of 172 respondents. The survey reached 369 households in Guilford County, 181 of which were cable subscriber-households.

We all know that people watch public access television. But in order to prove it, we must be diligent in our quest for hard data. Find out who's watching your community access channel and then tell the world!

Results showed that 57 percent of those surveyed had watched the county access channel (a combined PEG channel operated by Time Warner) and 43 percent had not. Ten types of programming frequently provided on PEG access channels were listed and respondents were asked if they or their family would be interested in seeing any of them. Each of the 10 types received significant indication of interest, with educational or informational programming receiving the highest interest at 83.9 percent. The next three highest in support were a calendar of community events (74.6%), news about local government (68.5%) and news about local organizations (64.6%).⁹

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then tell the world!

[Portions of this article excerpted from my book, *Public Access Television: America's Electronic Soapbox*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999.]

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- ⁶ Margie Nicholson, "Cable Access: Community Channels and Productions for Nonprofits," *Strategic Communications for Nonprofits*, Washington, DC: Benton Foundation, 1992.
- ⁷ Andy Newman, "More Than Television," *The New York Times*, 7 January 1996, sec. NJ, p. 10.
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- ⁹ "Do County Residents Support Public Access Television? Guilford County Cable Subscriber Survey Results," Unpublished, June 4, 1997, 2.

Figure 2. Comparison of viewership among cable channels, 1986.

CNN	WTBS	ESPN	A&E	CBN TIME	LIFE ACCESS	PUBLIC	BET	CSPAN	FNN	SPN	PTL
61%	58%	47%	26%	21%	20%	14%	13%	12%	10%	8%	8%

SOURCE: David Atkin and Robert LaRose, "Cable Access: Market Concerns Amidst the Marketplace of Ideas," *Journalism Quarterly* 68 (Fall 1991): 356-358.

Research shows that the average TV household views only 15 to 17 channels, even if over 200 channels are available! (source: Nielsen Media Research) The challenge, therefore, is for your PEG channel to become one of those 15 to 17 channels that a viewer considers watching when it is TV tune-in time. This requires building a relationship with your audience and fulfilling a need for them.

First you need to understand that viewers utilize TV like they do any other consumer product, to meet a need and express who they are. TV channels have become like cars, beyond their practical function. Our choice says something about who we think we are and the image we like to portray to others. How many times have you heard someone say, "I only watch PBS?" What are they trying to tell you about themselves? What do people say about themselves if they only watch CNN? Or the Cartoon Network?

If someone you met told you that they were a regular viewer of your PEG channel, what would they be saying about themselves? Try to answer that question with the staff at your station and see what you can come up with. Make your list. Try to focus on what makes your channel unique from every other cable channel on the line-up. Try to figure out what needs your channel meets for a viewer. Perhaps the person who would watch your station likes to know what is going on in the community, cares about what happens in their neighborhood, or likes to participate in local events.

Once you've made your list, look at your programming line-up and see which programs best meet the reasons someone would watch the channel. These are the programs you want to promote the most and prominently feature on your channel. It isn't necessary to promote every program on the channel; most channels don't. They promote those shows that best showcase what their channel is about and that distinguishes them from all of the other channels.

Showcase your unique features to build your brand and tell your potential viewing audience why they should watch your PEG channel.

Win your viewers one-by-one by providing ways for them to become involved with the channel. Whether it is having live call-in shows or giving them a way to have contact with the channel via email,

MAKING THE LIST

How to Become One of the 15 to 17 Channels Viewers Consider Worth Watching

BY ROBIN GEE

there are lots of low cost ways to create promotional flurry!

In Denver, Colorado, viewers can request repeats of their favorite shows to air on Fridays. This lets staff see what shows are popular and gives viewers the pleasure of helping to program the channel.

In Santa Monica, California, viewers can sign-up at the city's website through their WIN system to have CityTV program schedules automatically sent to them every two weeks.

In Calabasas, California, the bulletin board has local history and trivia questions. The first viewers to answer win their very own CTV mug! Winners are known to get so excited that they can't wait to have the mug mailed to them, they come in person to pick them up!

Local businesses and non-profits can become a no-cost source of prizes to have viewer giveaways on your channel. Many commercial stations give away tickets to events and other freebies to viewers, why not for your PEG channel too? Local museum passes, nonprofit theaters/dance troupes/orchestras and college sporting event tickets are non-commercial tickets to give away. Most are happy to have the free promotion for their events on the PEG channel. This can extend to local movie theaters and restaurants. The local music store and book store may also want to contribute prizes.

If you would normally promote an event on your bulletin board, do a promo for the event and/or cover it for your news show, you should request that your channel be named the media sponsor for the event. This gives you more visibility and mileage for the resources that you are already providing. As a media sponsor you should request that the channel logo be placed on all materials promoting the event. You may also be given a booth or allowed to put up a banner at the event.

And, you may also be given free passes to the event, t-shirts or other promotional goodies that you can then give away on the air to your viewers as another way to promote the event.

In some communities, receiving recognition for service in the community is even more valuable than winning a programming award! If your channel does regular promotion and support of a non-profit organization, it may be possible for the channel to be recognized for its outstanding service. In some cases you may have to be nominated by someone from the organization. Receiving the award usually means receiving recognition in the local press, being honored at an event that might have a few council members in attendance and getting visibility through your channel's name being on invitations and programs.

If you do programs featuring local nonprofit organizations, offer to give them several airdates in advance if they will promote the PEG program in their own newsletters. Give them a still frame from the program to use as a picture for the article to increase your space in the newsletter. This gives the organization the opportunity to describe and promote the program as well as get the name of the station out to their audience. Many organizations have mailing lists in the thousands. It helps showcase at no cost the good community work that the channel is doing.

Many of us place our focus on filling our airtime, completing programs and staying within budget. We tend to look at who is requesting airtime for the channel and then scheduling them in appropriately. As PEG programmers we should also be looking at making our channels relevant to the communities that we serve in order to fulfill their needs and interests. That is how an audience can be built. This requires knowing how you are serving your audience, developing your niche and promoting what makes your channel unique. Sometimes in the bustle of trying to do more with less, we lose sight of our end user—our viewer. But in creating a more secure future for ourselves as PEG channels, the audience is one of our most critical elements.

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And the Survey Says...

DOING THE BEST WITH WHAT YOU HAVE

COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A typical Community Needs Assessment (CNA) to evaluate PEG access in a locality will include, but is not limited to:

- ▲ findings and recommendations about existing PEG access management models;
- ▲ employee and customer relations (access, city, cable provider);
- ▲ community outreach and evaluation mechanisms present in the locality;
- ▲ PEG access funding, feasibility for PEG access expansion; and
- ▲ an analysis of the cable franchise governance.

BY PAT GARLINGHOUSE

*A*nd the survey says? Conducting a survey may not exactly conjure up feelings of delight. The process often sounds 'academic' and beyond our reach. Local access centers take heart. While it is always preferable to contract with a firm who regularly collects information, funding for this is sometimes prohibitive. If doing your survey from your facility is the only option, you can get very useable results.

Robin Gee (in the previous article) writes eloquently and candidly about some simple tasks that an access center can perform to find out who your audiences are and what they want from access. All of the activities that Robin cites may be incorporated into a 'home-made' center survey by observing some simple suggestions.

First, and foremost, is a comprehensive community needs assessment (CNA) that, once again, should be performed by a specialist. If that is not possible there are ways that an access center may gather much of the same information. A typical CNA to evaluate PEG access in a locality will include, but is not limited to, findings and recommendations about existing PEG access management models, employee and customer relations (access, city, cable provider), community outreach and evaluation mechanisms present in the locality, PEG access funding, feasibility for PEG access expansion and an analysis of the cable franchise governance.

Your best bet is to get your local cable provider and city cable administrator to conduct a survey, preferably with your input on the questions asked. You would still conduct your own survey but would have some comparison data available. Purchasing

an address list that has already been selected randomly from the population to be surveyed would be great.

Absent the ability to conduct the formal investigation for such a study, consider contacting local colleges, nonprofits and volunteer organizations who may be able to assist. Your goal is knowledge about your city, cable provider, and the community—your audience. You want to know as much as possible how your locality views access.

Based on a CNA decide what you want your survey to examine and design your survey instrument (phone, mail-out, other). Included here are examples of questions that you might consider, a mock survey proposal, and various analyses that you can perform to understand and communicate the results.

In addition, review other access surveys, read about survey implementation, provide training for your volunteers who will ask the questions (make sure questions are asked uniformly), perform a test run to make sure your survey questions are clear and getting the results you want, and determine how you will analyze and communicate the results. Gather your information for your list of questions by interviewing your producers (public access) or your specific community audiences (education and government access). Your trial run should include queries to a small representative sample of persons where you will primarily test the clarity of your questions. You want your respondents to be able to respond quickly and not have 'questions about the questions.'

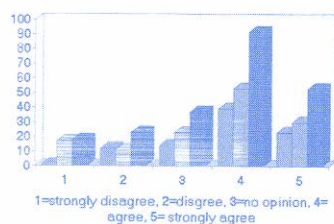
Above all else, keep your survey language simple, basic, clear and on a fourth grade reading level. Information is power!

Have you heard of ACTV?



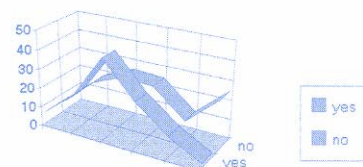
Note: The majority of Austinites are aware of the existence of community access channels [ACTV].

The degree of importance of providing community access services to public



Note: A majority of survey respondents agree that it is important to have a community access facility to serve the community.

Internet access by age



Note: Age 30-45 year olds have most access to the internet. Age has a reverse correlation in terms of internet access.

Example only of sample wording for survey analysis based on survey studies performed by Pat Garlinghouse and Daphne Lin. The wording is for Public Access, but similar wording can easily be adapted for Educational and Government access.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study will be to assess community audiences' opinion about Houston MediaSource's services and public access in general and will examine the Houston viewership in terms of who is watching access channels; how often and when they watch the access programs; what kind of programs they are watching; and how satisfied they are related to the value of access television. Viewers' demographic information will highlight the relationship between the characteristics of viewers and their use of local programming. This will allow HMS to gauge the audiences' awareness and interest level in viewing community programming and, most important, the survey results will reveal ways to improve access channels for better representation of the grassroots community. This study will be a valuable source of planning for community media resources for Houstonians, Houston City Government, the cable industry, and community access facilities in the nation.

Instrumentation

The audience survey questionnaire was derived from community access audience surveys performed for community media in several large cities. The questions were ultimately modified to meet the needs of the Houston community. A pilot test will be conducted prior to implementation of a city-wide mailing to ensure validity and reliability. The final survey contains 43 questions. The final survey list will be a stratified random sampling, representative of the Houston population. A follow-up phone survey will also be conducted. HMS' name change must have a chance to settle in before a valid survey of services is conducted, sometime in 2001. A description of HMS services will be given to respondents similar to the following:

Please give me your opinion about the following statement. Houston MediaSource is a place where any ordinary citizen in Houston can make a TV program about any subject of your choosing (according to law) and then show the program on cable TV. A large part of the cost of making this TV program is paid for by the cable TV companies. Do you think that this is a very good idea, somewhat of a good idea, or not a good idea?

Analysis

A standard statistical package will be employed to analyze

data results. The data were constructed in open-ended questions that will yield descriptive results about the relationships and media values of the Houston population according to gender, age, income, ethnicity, and education.

Discussion

The New York Times reports that although exact numbers of viewers of community access channels is unknown, the audience is expanding. According to recent surveys approximately 200,000 persons were watching public access in Houston. As the concept expanded and more people became aware of such a service the viewers increased. The penetration rate in Houston is expected to be over 60 percent for cable. Video training on-line alone will expand community involvement.

Conclusion

Many, if not all, of the results of this survey are expected to mirror patterns in all walks of life—only the extremes seem to get attention from the public. Issues such as affirmative action, civil rights, school prayer, censorship and gun control are among the complex social issues now at the center of national debate. Because we all have a stake in the debate's outcomes, our ability to voice informed opinions about these matters is critical. HMS provides a forum for free exchange of ideas in the community. HMS is eager to explore how its services model community diversity, alternative media, and everyone's ability to participate.

Houston and HMS were used to indicate where you insert your own local information.

The following survey instrument was developed by University of Texas–Austin doctoral student Daphne Lin.

HOUSTON MEDIASOURCE VIEWERSHIP SURVEY

Do you subscribe to cable in Houston?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, for about how long? _____

If no, did you ever subscribe to cable in the past?

Yes _____ No _____

If no, why do you not subscribe now?

- ___ Quality
- ___ Convenience
- ___ Cost
- ___ Other

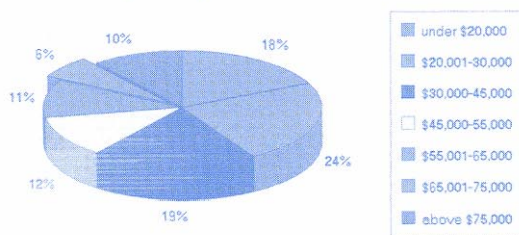
When do you usually watch TV?

1. Morning ___ 2. Afternoon ___ 3. Evening ___ 4. Late night ___

Have you heard of Houston MediaSource (HMS)?

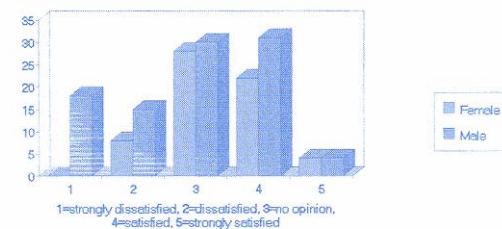
Yes _____ No _____

Respondents by Income



Note: Participants' income level is fairly evenly distributed. A large number (18%) of respondents are students and retirees, which fall into the under \$20,000 income group. Considerably higher numbers (10%) of respondents indicate having income above \$75,000.

The degree of satisfaction of ACTV's services by gender



Note: Austinites in general are satisfied with ACTV's programming. Females tend to be more satisfied with ACTV's programs than males.

Have you ever watched programs on the HMS channel?

Yes _____ No _____

List cable channels:

Can you name your favorite HMS show(s)?

How often do you watch HMS?

1. Frequently ____ 2. Sometimes ____ 3. Seldom ____
4. Never ____ 5. Don't Know ____

Following are different types of programs, please indicate your preference on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 stands for strongly dislike, 2 = dislike, 3 = no opinion, 4 = like, and 5 = strongly like)

- ____ Community issues & news
____ Arts & culture
____ Public affairs & current events
____ Religious or inspirational programming
____ Educational & children programming
____ Music & performing arts
____ Adult programming

What kind of programming do you like to see on HMS?

How do you usually find out when a show is scheduled?

1. Houston Chronicle ____ 2. Word of mouth ____ 3. Channel surfing ____ 4. TV ads ____ 5. Print ads ____ 6. Other ____

Are you aware that HMS provides video training for you to produce your own TV show?

Yes _____ No _____

Are you aware that HMS facilities and video equipment are available for you to use at very low cost?

Yes _____ No _____

Would you (or members of your household) be interested in using HMS facility services in the future?

Yes _____ No _____ Maybe _____

Following are some services that HMS provides, please indicate how important they are to you on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = least important, 2 = not very important, 3 = no opinion, 4 = somewhat important, 5 = most important)

- ____ I can watch locally produced shows
____ I can watch shows that you cannot find on broadcast or major networks
____ I can get in-depth information on political issues and municipal events
____ I can produce my own TV programs
____ I can engage in community activities

How satisfied are you with the programs offered on the HMS channel? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 stands for strongly dissatisfied, 2 = dissatisfied, 3 = no opinion, 4 = satisfied, and 5 = strongly satisfied)

Have you ever participated in HMS other than as a viewer?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, participated as:

1. Producer ____ 2. Sponsor ____ 3. Call-in show ____ 4. Host of a show ____ 5. Volunteer ____ 6. Talent or Other ____

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree about the following three statements on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 stands for strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = no opinion, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree)

The mission of HMS is to promote a free exchange of ideas, community dialogue and individual and artistic expression via cable television and other media. Do you

1. Strongly disagree ____ 2. Disagree ____ 3. No opinion ____
4. Agree ____ 5. Strongly agree ____

I consider HMS resources important to have in my community.

Do you

1. Strongly disagree ____ 2. Disagree ____ 3. No opinion ____
4. Agree ____ 5. Strongly agree ____

I think local government and the cable company should work hand-in-hand to provide public access to the community. Do you

1. Strongly disagree ____ 2. Disagree ____ 3. No opinion ____
4. Agree ____ 5. Strongly agree ____

Do you now have access to the Internet?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, access from?

1. Home ____ 2. School ____ 3. Work ____ 4. Other ____
(check all that apply)

If information about HMS video resources were available on HMS' website, would you access this information?

Yes _____ No _____ Maybe _____

Would you be interested in video training courses on-line at HMS?

Yes _____ No _____ Maybe _____

PART II PERSONAL INFORMATION

Your gender?

1. Female ____ 2. Male ____

What is your ethnic group?

1. Native American ____ 2. Asian ____ 3. Black ____
4. White ____ 5. Hispanic ____ 6. Mixed ____
7. _____

Which age group?

1. Under 20 ____ 2. 20-30 ____ 3. 30-45 ____
4. 46-55 ____ 5. 56-65 ____ 6. 66-80 ____ 7. 80+ ____

Your annual household income:

1. Under \$20,000 ____ 2. \$20,001-\$30,000 ____
3. \$30,001-45,000 ____ 4. \$45,001-55,000 ____
5. \$55,001-75,000 ____ 6. \$75,001-100,000 ____
7. \$100,000+ ____

Do you own or rent your home?

1. Rent ____ 2. Own ____

Could you indicate your occupation:

1. Self-employed ____ 2. Professional ____ 3. Technical ____
4. Student ____ 5. Retired ____ 6. Other ____

How many years of education have you completed?

1. Less than 12 years ____ 2. High School diploma ____
3. Some college ____ 4. College degree ____
5. Graduate degree ____

How many years have you lived in Houston:

1. Less than 2 years ____ 2. 2 to 5 years ____
3. 6 to 10 years ____ 4. 11 to 20 years ____
5. Above 20 years ____

What is your zip code? _____

(double check with address)

Sampling Display of Results

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Swigging, Sampling and Sporting

ENCOUNTERING AUDIENCES AS CULTURAL AGENTS

BY BILL KIRKPATRICK

The mood in the room is quiet, menacing; an undercurrent of anger and acrimony sucks away all levity. The issue on the table is the rezoning of a hillside residential area, and the divisions among the alders show clearly in the sarcastic rolling of eyes, in the too-forceful flick of a microphone off-switch. Democracy at work—ha! This is a pitched battle, nothing less, waged through nuisance motions and procedural votes, over the real terrain of somebody's neighborhood: depending on who "takes" the hill, lives will be changed, fortunes made, the landscape altered forever.

And David couldn't care less. That is, he cares in the abstract about development in the city, but he doesn't live on that hill, and so what if someone wants to put up an office building where houses used to be. That's not why David is watching the council meeting on the access channel. Claiming to be "basically apolitical," he watches it for the drama, the tension. As he told me, "It's the personalities [of the alders] that are fun. You get to know them, you almost know what they are going to say, their ticks. It's like following a baseball team."

In this article, I will argue that we who support PEG access need to not only accept, but embrace and even promote attitudes like David's. We need to break from our notions of the "ideal" viewer, thinking more about how and why people watch television, and working to encourage alternative types of viewing. My experience has been that many of us involved in access, if our thinking ever seriously shifts from the production to the reception of access programming, tend to conceive of the audience in ways that are far too limiting and constricted. I hope to offer some new ways of thinking about access audiences, and spur further strategies for encountering audiences on different terms.

Traditionally in the U.S., audiences have been conceptualized in one of two ways. In the first of these conceptions,

This is the idea of the audience member as a cultural agent, someone who gathers meanings and pleasures from cultural products (like television shows) and works to integrate them into her identity against a background of other social and cultural factors.

the audience member is viewed as an economic agent, someone whose tastes and viewing habits are of interest for the money she can spend. Given our predominantly commercial system, this view of the audience has led to the wonderful widespread world of advertising, lowest common denominators, narrowcasting, demographic profiling, "least objectionable programming," and relentless study of viewers' thought patterns and purchasing habits (as a recent *Frontline* pointed, they don't call it human research or people research, but market research). In this conception, the audience is made up of consumers, and television exists to attract eyeballs in order to involve their owners in the capitalist process. As any student of American television knows, programs sell audiences to advertisers, and the ideal viewer is a purchaser who acts upon the commercial messages that television presents.

People involved in PEG access are rightly suspicious of applying this conception of audiences to their operations. Although they may warily undertake audience surveys, they also work to distance their results from the terms, means, and ends of commercial audience research, Nielsen ratings, and the like. They understand that, for PEG access, the audience member is not an economic agent, and adopting that notion can only harm the PEG access project. And unlike commercial broadcasters, maximizing the target audience is usually not the goal.

But access practitioners also have their own conception of the audience: the audience member as political agent. This is small-p political, concerned with

the relationship between the individual and society (as opposed to capital-p, issues-oriented politics), but it nonetheless entails ramifications for understanding the viewer. It revolves around ideas like building community, supporting diversity, and connecting people with other people and groups. In this conception, the audience is made up of citizens, and the purpose of television is to facilitate civic participation, to get the viewer involved in the social and political life of the area, to join the public sphere. At its root is an often unspoken model of democracy and community, and here the ideal viewer is a citizen who acts upon the political messages that television presents.

There is nothing inherently wrong with either of these two conceptions: the audience as economic or political agents. The problem is in the tendency to see the two as more-or-less mutually exclusive, leading to one of the most troublesome cultural myths that alternative media must contend with on a daily basis: the false dichotomy of citizen and consumer. One hears versions of this trope all the time, for example when Ralph Engelman writes, "The question is whether the last vestiges of independent mass communication systems will be destroyed along with a notion of citizenship distinct from the consumership."

While this citizen/consumer dichotomy might have strategic value for non-commercial media, citizenship and consumption are in fact inseparable in 21st-century America. There are obviously precious few non-consuming citizens; we are in fact consumers and citizens all the time. Furthermore, our public and pri-

vate lives are thoroughly saturated with commercial and civic meanings—sometimes overlapping, and sometimes at odds. For example, all political decisions are made against the background of a consumerist, market economy; it is an inescapable fact of our existence. At the same time, as Irene Meijer has pointed out, even blatantly commercial messages are full of lessons on what it means to be a good citizen, a good parent, a healthy community, a vibrant democracy, and a civic-minded society. And while objections and exceptions could be raised to both of these observations, my point is that many access advocates continue to write and think as if viewers could take simply off their consumer hats and put on their citizen hats, as if the state and the market were two distinct entities, as if there were a real boundary between our civic and our economic lives. They continue to draw a line between the ideal consumer-viewer of commercial television and the ideal citizen-viewer of PEG access.

Why is this a problem? Because by failing to break down the citizen-consumer binary in our thinking, we are on the one hand denying the civic and political potential in consumerism and commercial media, and on the other hand overly stigmatizing commercialism as an inherently corrupting influence. Now, I recognize that this is a contentious issue, and that there are very good legal, historical, and practical reasons for being suspicious of commercialism—a suspicion I tend to share. But to pretend that we can draw a strict line between commercialism and citizenship is to dangerously misrecognize the social situation we are confronted with, even perhaps to see enemies where we might see allies. (As a simple example, a nature documentary on the Discovery Channel is, I would argue, at least as likely to inspire local environmental activism as the best-produced public access show.) But my main purpose is not to debate the merits of access' traditional non-commercial status, but to introduce a new way of thinking about the audience member beyond her status as an economic or political agent, consumer or citizen.

This is the idea of the audience member as a cultural agent, someone who gathers meanings and pleasures from cultural products (like television shows)

...many of us involved in access, if our thinking ever seriously shifts from the production to the reception of access programming, tend to conceive of the audience in ways that are far too limiting and constricted.

and works to integrate them into her identity against a background of other social and cultural factors. I realize that this is a bit abstract, so let me give an example right away, using a cultural product that most people in the U.S. are familiar with, the film *Titanic*. Viewing the audience for *Titanic* as economic agents could mean thinking about the marketable desires and interests of young teenaged girls (the biggest single audience segment for the film), which led to the casting of Leonardo DiCaprio and merchandising tie-ins like the "Heart of the Ocean" pendant necklace. Viewing the audience as political agents could mean decrying the depoliticizing influence of mainstream entertainment or, alternatively, analyzing the class and gender politics of the film. Viewing the audience as cultural agents, as Melanie Nash and Martti Lahti did in their excellent article, could mean focusing on how the girls used the film to bond with friends, to structure their social life, to work through their own emerging sexuality, and to construct their own fantasies and identities. In this regard, Nash and Lahti found that many girls even "re-wrote" the ending of the film so that Jack (DiCaprio's character) doesn't die, or that the ship doesn't even sink. The girls derived meanings and pleasures from the film that could not be predicted and that did not always conform to the girls' status as economic and political agents.

Applying this to audiences for PEG access means appreciating the ways that audiences can take their own meanings and pleasures from our programming, instead of conforming to the ideal viewership that we are often tempted to impose on them. Rather than continually

describing access viewership in political terms we need to understand and celebrate the variety of pleasures that access can offer. Unlike many, I believe that PEG access should not be satisfied with small audiences, since every minute spent watching access is one less minute that commercial culture has to purchase our souls. Instead, we should be concerned with maximizing audiences (even as we recognize how comparatively small that "maximum" will always be). One way to do that is to seek out and promote alternative viewing strategies and pleasures whenever we encounter audiences.

It begins with the ways in which we address potential audience members. In promotions, PSAs, orientation sessions, in-school appearances, monthly guides, etc., we are continually addressing audiences. But far too often these encounters focus solely on recruiting new producers ("You, too, can make TV!") while neglecting efforts to recruit new audiences. For example, how many access centers use their initial orientation sessions to challenge participants' role as watchers, rather than makers, of public access television? The individuals attending such sessions will probably spend much more time watching television than producing it, yet we pass up an opportunity to get them to question their expectations of TV, their viewing strategies, and the pleasures possible with the unlikely of programs.

In part this failure to recruit audiences occurs because we're overly focused on production, and in part it's because we are too locked in to our conception of the ideal viewer. We may even be guilty of thinking that it is obvious why and how someone might watch and enjoy a given show, an error that the case of *Titanic* makes clear. Alternatively, many people would respond that they don't really care why someone might watch—that's not their concern nor their end of the business. But if we want PEG access to grow and thrive, we need to think more about how television fits into our varied cultural lives and try to spread that notion as widely as possible. One of the questions that repeatedly arises in this issue of the *CMR* is, "Who's watching?" My preferred question would be, "Who's not watching, and how can we get them to watch?" This is the same as asking what PEG access as a genre of televi-

sion can offer someone who doesn't fit the profile of the ideal viewer as a political agent. How can we take the viewers who say, "Public access programming is not for me," and instead of trying to change those people (to make them more community-minded, more political, more appreciative of the local), and instead of writing them off as people whom we simply won't reach, we show them how even they, with their own cultural needs and desires, can intersect with access on a variety of levels.

I have attempted this trick myself, though I am still developing ways to make it work. As a university instructor, I show students various clips from our local public access station and encourage them to see the differences between access and commercial programming as something more than deficiencies. It's not that public access has "lower" production values, but "different" production values, and I try to show how those are values that students might share. I solicit ways in which even "bad" or "boring" programming can be enjoyable, and appeal (subtly, I hope) to the college student's rebellious instincts in order to lead them to occasionally rebel against mainstream television. I also encourage (though never require) research projects on PEG access. And I have had students later come up to me to discuss public access programs they have watched, or talk about the ways that they have incorporated PEG access into their culture. For example, in one case, an amateur musician used a local religious broadcast as a source of samples for her sound collages, and in another (since I teach at the University of Wisconsin, after all) a student used a public affairs show as the center of a fraternity drinking game. These creative acts of audiences as cultural agents are not what the founders of PEG access probably had in mind, but for me they represent a resounding success.

As audience members, we are always economic, political, and cultural agents. Whenever we encounter audiences, we need to avoid pitting the economic possibilities of television against the political possibilities, a strategy which merely creates a false dichotomy between two types of ideal viewership. Instead, we need to think about the interplay of economics, politics, and culture, and work to connect access to a wider range of values and pleasures—and thereby a wider range of audiences. At more points and places than we realize, we have the opportunity to expand the audience, but it requires thinking not solely about the production, but also reception of PEG access and all of its possible cultural uses.

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Call for Papers

REVITALIZING ACCESS PHILOSOPHY

The White Paper Committee is seeking papers and essays for presentation during a "White Paper" session during the 2002 International Conference and Trade Show of the Alliance for Community Media in Houston, Texas, July 10-13. Abstracts will also be considered. Author must attend the White Paper session during the Alliance conference.

The single paper or essay selected for presentation will be chosen from competitive submissions. Paper and presentation should be accessible to a general audience of community media practitioners and interested parties. This session is one of several White Paper discussions scheduled for the Houston conference. The 2001 Alliance White Paper is available on the *Community Media Review* website at www.communitymediareview.org.

AREAS OF FOCUS

Submissions are invited pertaining to any area of access, but should address more philosophical aspects of public, educational, or governmental access/community media/alternative media, democratization of the media, introspective analysis of basic access tenets, access and activism, international community media, etc. Of special interest are submissions that critique access philosophical underpinnings, or compare the tenets and traditions of US community media with alternative media in other parts of the world (particularly Latin America). However, other works dealing with access or media democracy in general are also appreciated.

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Audience as Constituents: *Leadership – Who, Me?*

BY STUART HEADY

Self Esteem. Confidence. A huddled aversion to dealing with "them," Cynicism about the political process. A sense of loyalty to the group versus loyalty to the community. Fear of the unknown. Fear of successful, famous and powerful people.

These are psychological earmarks of the turbulence encountered in rising above self identity as an individual or as a small and unimportant group. The fact is that public access over the years can have great significance in the life and politics of a community. Anyone who wishes to have a role in promoting public access also is on a path to becoming a community leader among other community leaders, and should be aware of and embrace this.

This may be a paradigm shift of dizzying proportions, which may be unwelcome and uncomfortable. Defensiveness and irritation could well be a reasonable response to this. For a new group, the situation may be scary. For a group encountering a crisis, it may be terrifying. It may be tempting to retreat into process for process' sake and become self-involved or defensive.

In Austin, over the 25 years that I was involved and able to observe it, a series of make-or-break challenges actually brought the community together and public access was accepted by the majority on the city council as having opened the dialogue between racial groups and across economic and geographic lines that normally were pretty uncrossable. This addressed the political health of the entire community environment. The entire polity of the community had been changed in a good way because of the overall existence of public access.

Thus, public access is a leadership issue for progressive and enlightened leaders—only some of whom get elected—interested in the fruits of dialogue across community lines. Something that costs as little as access and can promote the health of the entire polity is a pretty amazing return on investment.

This is in fact more important now than ever. More and more, the shortcomings of the commercial media are being talked about in every segment of the population. The fact is that the media can't "cover" the full panoply of everything going on in its full complexity. Even if it did, there would be something vital missing. Actual contact between real people discussing whatever is on their minds as neighbors, as artists, as kooky maverick tweekers of

the public sobriety. Americans being real.

The thing is that the effort to make public access work is an ongoing campaign that never ends. The constituents are members of the public who believe it should receive good public support, who also happen to be the audience.

At the time of the 25th anniversary in Austin, I was asked to get up and talk about the event. I looked around the room. There were city council members present, and a variety of folks representing the energy of the community. Not in the room, but just as vital were those whose names had once been on a mailing list because they had produced a show, or had volunteered to hold a microphone, or had been somehow involved. The attempt to keep lists over the years had been a problem, but having looked at most of them, it seemed reasonable to estimate that some 30,000 people had passed through the system. In a city that now included about 750,000 people about 80,000 were voters. Among those, the community of active people was probably about 40,000 people. It had taken 25 years, but public access had become fully integrated with the community and with the community's leadership.

There were many false starts. No one meeting or series of meetings made the difference and no one person stands out among the hundreds who put their energies into arguing the arguments and working on the problems.

It isn't easy, but then nothing with real worth ever is.

We live within an environment where technology seems expected to overtake humans in significance in the history of evolution. We may be tempted to see computers and electronic networking as overcoming public access and making it obsolete.

However, after observing that trend since 1992 when the internet began to be around, it seems to me that never has the need for a means for facilitating human to human dialogue at the community level been more acute. It is likely to me that public access might actually wind up being way more significant than even those who have been strong proponents have given it credit for being.

Stuart Heady was involved in the political acid test to establish public access in Austin between 1979 and 1998. He is now able to reflect on this experience from the vantage point of Seattle, Washington where he now lives. Email: blunncreek@earthlink.net

DANCING SHAMAN ON THE OLDEST TV

*Late night fuzz. What channel is this?
Drum Shaman dances into our Dream
fading in and out as coals do in
a late night fire.*

*Beat of a drum, beat of a heart
in a shouting silence, this speaks
not of the past
but of ourselves*

*images on television screens
or
in firelight. Which one is real?*

*Turn off the sound.
See these images side by side.*

*Drumming shaman dancing
singing
thousands of years ago
A human head, face animated,
talking or
singing.*

*What are we doing? How old is
this Dream?*

*We are dreaming together,
as we have been since the beginning,
that one day we will wake up
fully conscious.*

– Stuart Heady 2002

Government Access

WHOSE CHANNEL IS IT, ANYWAY?

BY BRAD CLARK

*A*s staff of Government Access TV channels, with many if not most of our channels being agencies of local governments, it's easy for us to have a narrow focus of just who makes up our audience. The mayor or city manager, other elected officials, or other agency heads or staff can often be the "stakeholders" by which we measure our effectiveness or success in meeting our mission. Understandable to be sure, as these are the people we interact with on a daily basis, and who are generally not shy about letting us know how they think we're doing—but are these people really the audience we exist to serve?

The mission of the Madison City Channel, which I suspect is very similar to that of most of your channels, is to "make local government accessible to Madison residents." That means for us, job number one is to serve the public. The residents of Madison, after all, are the people who pay for our service, either through their property taxes or through PEG fees on their monthly cable bill, and it's obviously important to recognize that audience and their needs and expectations as we operate our channels each day.

And, as Madison's version of "C-Span," it's safe to presume what some of those expectations are. Just as most of you, we cover the major meetings of local government; produce public affairs programs which go in-depth on issues facing our city or make vital government information available to citizens; produce a community bulletin board with public sector job listings, city information, and public service announcements from nonprofit organizations; and cover, through what we call our "Ad-Hoc" production fund, special press conferences, meetings, hearings, and presentations that give our viewers a more complete view of the role of government in their lives.

But how do we know that this is what

our audience wants? How can we find out?

Certainly viewer surveys are one way, and we have done our share of them in the past, either on our own or in cooperation with the local cable provider (Charter in our case). We've also had surveys conducted by enlisting the help of marketing classes at the University of Wisconsin. And, these surveys can be helpful in identifying general awareness or viewership trends or general opinions on whether or not your channel is meeting the expectations of your audience.

There are, however, some concerns. First of all, they can be expensive. Even surveys we've done with university classes have still cost us several thousand dollars for materials.

Another concern, if you get into percentages (i.e. "How often do you watch...") is the numbers you might come up with. Since, let's face it, Government Access programming is a pretty good definition of "narrowcasting" (people by definition must have at least some interest in what their local government is up to before they're likely to spend much time watching), the numbers you get in this age of 70-plus cable channels are likely to be small, and the danger is that people won't really know how to interpret them. Better I think to ask more general questions ("are you familiar with..." or "in the last month, have you watched the channel..." or "Overall, how would you rate the job...")

Finally, if you ask the general public for their wishes for future programming, be aware that they may not know what the possibilities are, or may identify programming (such as "sports") that really aren't a part of your mission.

Having said all that, I do believe that carefully constructed surveys can give you some general ideas of what your viewing public is watching and how they think you're doing, and it's always important to get that sense of ownership and "buy-in" of your efforts that the very

fact of your doing a survey can encourage. Hey, at least you're taking the time and trouble to ask a selected sample!

So if surveying the public can give us information and ratify the general efforts of our channels, how should we handle decision-making on specific programming issues (such as what meetings to cover on a regular basis)? Well, here I'm going to refer back to those more internal "stakeholders" mentioned earlier. Certainly, the mayor's office, the elected city council, and other agency heads or staff should have a much clearer and more specific idea than the general public of what you're doing and what needs should be considered. If the groups mentioned above don't know what you're up to, you need to make sure they do—they are in this sense often your most direct "customers," and they vote on your budget every year. Elected officials are the representatives of the public we exist to serve, and staff from other departments should have some thoughts on how to utilize your channel and your services to help their agencies serve the public.

In Madison we do a comprehensive "needs assessment" process every year with these various groups. This involves a presentation at a meeting of all city agency heads, questionnaires for them as well as all elected officials, and face-to-face meetings as required. By soliciting the specific opinions of these groups you not only get them thinking about the specific ways in which our channels meet their missions, you also (and again it's hard to overemphasize this) encourage buy-in and ownership from these groups in the day-to-day decision-making process.

For example, in 1997 Madison negotiated a new franchise agreement with the then-provider TCI (today it's Charter). Out of that agreement, funding for PEG activities was increased. Well, you can bet that throughout the whole negotiating process (and really, before it started) I

was meeting with any member of the above groups who would sit down with me, and from those meetings and conversations City Channel was able to create a very specific five-year plan to address the issues raised. Again, this made it clear that we are "their" channel and that their input was what informed the plan we created.

This also helped us after the franchise was adopted and it was time to decide how to divide the increased funding between us and Madison's Public Access channel (which saw a very healthy increase in funding as well). We were able to go to council members and say, "Here are the needs you identified, and here are the ways we discussed that City Channel will meet those needs. In order to follow through we will need X percentage of the additional funding." And because we included them in the process at every step and made it clear that we wanted to meet the needs of the public as their elected representatives perceived them, we received the funding we requested and have basically met all of the goals in that plan.

Another example from that process involved meeting coverage. As could be expected, covering additional meetings was a main component in better connecting the Madison public with their local government; in particular, our assumption was that covering committees where issues were discussed in depth before they went to the council for final action would allow citizens to follow the progress of specific ideas throughout the entire government process. But which meetings would have the maximum impact toward achieving that goal? We didn't want to unilaterally decide that here at City Channel, so, we again surveyed elected officials and agency heads. The two meetings that we suspected would come out "on top" did in fact receive the vast majority of votes; so, we added regular coverage of those meetings. And, you can be sure that we put out a follow-up memo announcing the results and thanking those surveyed for their input, so that they knew we were listening to them.

We also followed a somewhat similar process when we revised our mission statement and policy guidelines in 1996 (and yes, I'll be happy to email you a copy) in anticipation of the 1997 refran-

...ultimately, the task as operators of Government access channels of knowing our audience is a multi-layered one, requiring awareness of and sensitivity to a balance of both internal and external users. It's crucial to utilize all the tools available to understand and meet the expectations of these audiences if for no other reason than to continue to justify our existence in these days of tightened budgets.

chising. We asked a couple of particularly supportive council members to sponsor our revised documents as a resolution, shepherded the resolution through the City committee process, and in the end saw our revised policies adopted as official City policy. This not only again allowed for ownership of our policies on what types of programming we should carry, tape retention, copyright issues—you name it—by the public's representatives, it also provided us, frankly, with political cover against requests by council members or city staff which we felt would constitute inappropriate use of our channel. After all, if an alder comes to us and wants us to produce a 30-minute "soapbox" for him to expound on his side (only) of a particular issue, it's a lot easier to say "No, that's not appropriate" when you can also point out that he voted to adopt the policy prohibiting such a program!

I also want to briefly discuss the role of the "Ad-Hoc" production fund mentioned above in meeting our mission. After we added the extra meeting coverage in 1997, we found that we still had the resources to cover other events. So we began covering press conferences, special public hearings, or other meetings of committees that we didn't regularly cover, as well as special forums and

presentations (such as a "brown bag" lunch presentation on "Ethics in Government" put on by the University of Wisconsin or presentations on various public policy issues offered by the local chapter of Rotary). Again, these programs don't necessarily address specific issues of the moment in Madison, but they do help provide a more well-rounded view of the concerns facing government at whatever level. For example, we have been covering a number of Rotary presentations by political science professors discussing terrorism and the history of conflicts in Afghanistan. We are generally able to cover between six to eight such events each month (the hard part has been establishing the networks, both formal and informal, to ensure that we know about these events in advance). The decision on which events to cover each month is mine.

Apparently we're doing a good job with this, as back in 1999 we (yes, again) surveyed our stakeholders with the question: "Are there additional regular meetings you would like to see us cover with the resources we're now using to cover these 'irregular' events, or should we retain the flexibility to cover these special productions each month?" The response was overwhelmingly in favor of covering these "Ad-Hoc" productions.

Technological advances have of course made it possible to expand the ways we connect the public with government in directions we didn't even imagine only a few years ago. Probably the best example of this of course is "streaming" our programming through the City Channel website (www.ci.madison.wi.us/mcc12). When it became clear that the technology (and its costs) had reached the level where this was a viable option for us, we plunged into it in a big way. Today, you can access both live and, perhaps even more importantly, archived coverage of virtually all of City Channel's regular programming.

This new service isn't simply just another way to watch a common council meeting; we consider it a difference in kind of our services. If you have access to the Internet anywhere in the world, you can check out last week's (or last year's, since computer "server" disk space is so plentiful and inexpensive) council meeting any time of the day or night. This frees our audience from having to watch

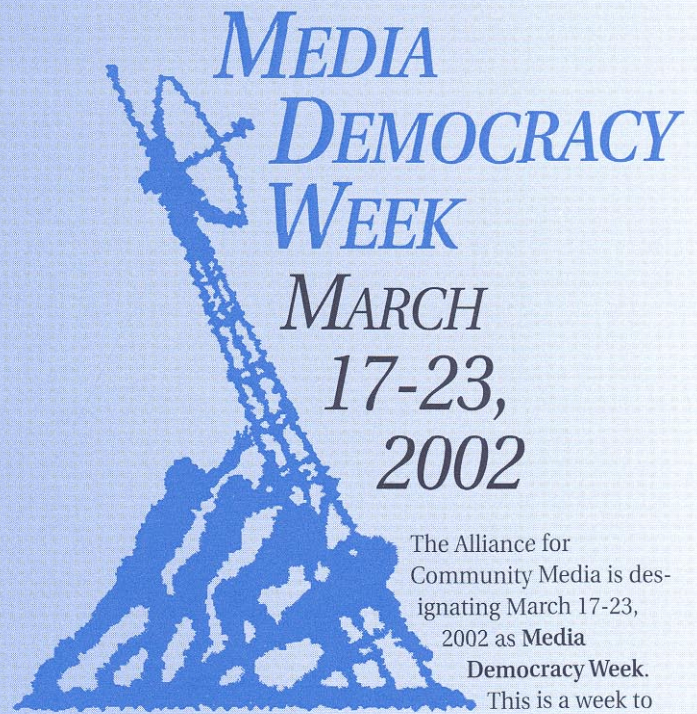
a meeting they're interested in according to our schedule; they can check it out on theirs. With personal computers becoming nearly as ubiquitous as VCRs and becoming more and more a part of people's daily lives at home as well as work, we can now reach people who, for whatever reason, have not thus far been able to access our programming.

What's more, with our recent ability to "index" common council meetings (so far, due to resource limitations, only council meetings and no others—yet), people can go directly to the particular item they're interested in within the four-hour, 100-item "file" of a typical council meeting—again, a true difference in kind (and as far as I know, we're the only channel around providing this "indexing" service on any of its programming). Streaming of our programming on the internet is another way to make it easier to provide another venue for people to keep track of their government. And, as the "Gen X" population ages and becomes a larger and larger segment of our audience, they will come in with these technological expectations up front, so it's vital for us to anticipate where future trends will allow us to go—because our audience will expect us to be there.

Here I'd like to share an analogy I often make on the importance of the services our channels provide. My family and I are avid readers, we probably visit the local library two or three times a week. My next-door neighbor, on the other hand probably doesn't even use the library. And yet, neither he nor anyone else questions that it's appropriate to spend a portion of our tax dollars to fund the library system, because when my neighbor does decide to use it, it's there for him. Similarly, whether half the city or only a few citizens decide at any given moment to access the window into their local government our channels provide, our goal should be that no one will ever question the importance of having that window available.

So ultimately, the task as operators of Government access channels of knowing our audience is a multi-layered one, requiring awareness of and sensitivity to a balance of both internal and external users. It's crucial to utilize all the tools available to understand and meet the expectations of these audiences if for no other reason than to continue to justify our existence in these days of tightened budgets. Cities are always going to need to pick up the trash, plow the streets, put out fires, protect their citizenry and make the newest Stephen King bestseller available; it's up to us to demonstrate that it's every bit as vital for our cities to take advantage of the technologies—both television and computer—that we provide to keep that connection between government and the governed, between those who spend tax dollars and those who foot the bill, a fundamental and essential component of our community's social compact.

Brad Clark is station manager of the Madison City Channel in Madison, Wisconsin. City Channel has been consistently recognized as one of the leading Government Access channels in the country by the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors (NATOA), and annually wins awards for the quality of their work at NATOA's yearly programming awards competition. Email: bclark@ci.madison.wi.us



celebrate and advance the role of media democracy in the perpetuation of liberty and freedom. This is also a week to bring attention to all the good work you do everyday. We hope access centers around the country will join with us in reaching out to the communities through various activities to educate and advocate on behalf of media democracy.

Possible activities to celebrate Media Democracy Week include (but are not limited to):

- ◆ **Have your city or county council pass a resolution** proclaiming March 17-23, 2002 as **Media Democracy Week** (a sample proclamation is available at www.alliancecm.org);
- ◆ **Circulate the Petition for Media Democracy** to various groups and organizations within the community (the petition is also available at www.alliancecm.org);
- ◆ **Create a Public Service Announcement or air the Campaign for Media Democracy video** at your access center. (These are available at cost for \$5.00 from the Alliance national office.)

For a full list of suggestions on possible **Media Democracy Week** activities, visit the Alliance website at www.alliancecm.org. Remember...this is a week for you to do what you think works in your community.

Audience: Does It Matter?

BY PAUL CONGO

Introduction

Every piece of work that gets made and shown on a Public, Educational, or Government (PEG) access channel has an audience—perhaps small, perhaps not so small. How many people watch our channels? The answer, of course, is that we don't know; Mr. Nielsen doesn't count us. It is true that we do not know exactly how many viewers we have at any given time. It is also true, however, that having many viewers for a show is not necessarily the best indicator that a show has great public value. Look at how many people watch the home shopping networks or the thousandth rerun of *The Love Boat*. Nevertheless, the numbers game seems to be important to many, such as public officials who decide the fate of our budgets. We are operating TV stations, are we not? Ratings must mean something or the media would not spend so much time talking about them.

Defining the Problem

I suggest that viewers are, in fact, important, but that it is the quality of our viewership rather than the quantity that matters. We are not going to win the numbers game, no matter how we dress up statistics and spin the analyses of survey responses about 'awareness of the channels.' We do not have the funding to buy the latest big broadcast toys with unlimited multi-motion graphics engines nor the time to learn how to use such toys. There is even less time or money for marketing our work, which generally falls by the wayside, much less becomes a line item in our budgets.

Why then, is knowing who the audience is and how to reach them, which is the real crux of our mission, so elusive? PEG access needs practice doing what our sister arts non-profit organizations have been doing for years—audience development. After all, concerts involving 'twelve-tone musical scales' or 'visual arts installations based on found materials' do not attract huge audiences either. That in no way, however, negates the value of the work being presented or its impact on the audience. Our sister organizations understand the necessity of relating to and encouraging the participation of potential audiences to the max.

Defining the Solution

We have several options. First we can make the assumption that we serve, exclusively, those who wish to speak on our channels, such as in public access. Second, we can take the position that our full mandate is to serve the community at large—something education and government access have a better handle on. Third, we can take the combined view that participation in PEG access as a viewer is just as valid a mode of participation as being a provider of programming.

Ultimately, regardless of the methodology that your community employs to structure PEG access, the people who subscribe to cable pay the bill. Much in the same way that cable operators pay fees to network providers for programming, local cable subscribers pay franchise fees (and more recently special PEG fees) to operate locally. Thus from a financial point of view PEG access has an obligation to serve cable viewers (subscribers).

I suggest that seeing the viewer as a participant of equal value to the access provider in no way diminishes the access mission of preserving the freedom of expression and access to information. Based on the previous discussion, access organizations must represent the viewers' rights, balancing their needs with those who provide the programming. Problems arising from channel gridlock, controversial programming and sheer volumes of shows force access to operate as efficiently as any successful commercial service.

Creating a detailed service mission for such a large and diverse constituency is a difficult task for many PEG organizations. Some, for example, develop policies about replays, scheduling like programming in time-blocks or procedures for how to handle complaints about shows that offend viewers. Most agree that integrating audience opinion into PEG operations, while important, does not take center stage until a programming crisis arises. Viewership strategies, while simple in concept yet difficult in execution, should become more important, if not the overriding factor in how PEG access defines their mission. Defining a plan that incorporates the needs of your community also defines your success.

Proposed Strategies

1. Sell your mission. Your first obligation to the community-at-large is to let them know that you are there, why you are there and how they can be a part of what you do. Develop a dynamic brochure and website that articulates and celebrates your mission. A clear presentation of your mission goes a long way toward success. Whatever plan you develop, be consistent. Develop your budget to include letters to the editor, community newsletters, ads and above all else, use your channels!

2. Develop a programming strategy. One approach, although not without controversy (see related sidebar), is to employ 'block or thematic scheduling,' where similar programs play together consecutively. Each evening, for example, the community can view public affairs programming from 7:00 p.m. until 10:00 p.m. Promotion of a theme block of programming is a far easier administrative task than promoting shows individually at 7, 7:30, 8, 8:30, 9, 9:30, and 10 p.m. Such an approach provides benefits to viewers, programming providers, and access administrators alike. Establishing mutual agreement for such an approach, offers the audiences predictable viewing and easy access to their favorite shows. Producers gain recognition and the paying public become supporters of access.

3. Promote your shows. Having established a general programming plan, the next step is getting the information out to the general public. Viewers are used to being able to go to their *TV Guide* or on-air display to read about upcoming shows. Our ability to provide this information correlates in large part with our success. At minimum, we should endeavor to have our channels and ongoing

PRIME TIME

TIME	CH	PROGRAM	CH	PROGRAM	CH	PROGRAM	CH	PROGRAM	CH	PROGRAM
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7:30	1	NEWS	2	NEWS	3	NEWS	4	NEWS	5	NEWS
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8:30	1	NEWS	2	NEWS	3	NEWS	4	NEWS	5	NEWS
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series listed on these schedules. Some access operations are able to schedule enough in advance to list individual shows as well. Many franchise agreements require cable operators to post information about access schedules. Work with your local cable provider to establish a process that will ensure your inclusion in their program promotions. Your respect with viewers will skyrocket.

4. Distribute your product. Some centers have extremely restrictive policies on distribution, fearful of 'commercial' implications. If a community provider (or producer) is successful financially, are they not more likely to continue doing their access work? I hope that we can find ways to encourage distribution as far as possible, even creating a royalty system (should a provider be lucky enough to have a hit video) or other means to acknowledge a center's assistance in creating the end product. At Access Monterey Peninsula, we charge a (retroactive) rental fee for equipment used to produce a piece that is distributed for fees after being shown on our channels. (We do not, of course, permit commercial content on-air or allow people to use access equipment to fulfill contracts.)

The internet is emerging as another distribution channel. The 'Net' has tremendous potential to extend audiences for access programming, especially if shows are available 'on-demand.' Imagine emailing every animal rights group in the country (which you found by doing a web search) that your show can be viewed at any time by linking to a particular access center's website.

Conclusion

The development of new audiences will present challenges to those working in the field, both philosophically and operationally. Those options, however, will also squeeze new 'juice' for access as the cable-only audience continues to fragment. PEG access has operated for many years with funding that has not been tied directly to audience numbers. We should understand what an anomaly this represents in American media.

There is no guarantee for PEG access as diversification continues and political winds shift. Finding audiences that support what we do, both politically and financially, can provide the key to continuing our work and success. The challenge and opportunity lies in 'doing it all' without sacrificing our core mission.

Paul Congo is executive director of Access Monterey Peninsula, 2200 Garden Road, Monterey, CA 93940, telephone 831.333.1267, or email congo@ampmedia.org

Targeting Your Audience Just Makes Good Sense

Block programming or thematic scheduling can be the answer to programming nightmares. It provides an easily communicated predictability to the schedule, eliminates the promotional nightmare of each individual show and locks in audience development. Maintaining a consistent time-block, during which specific content airs, maintains a consistent audience for the shows.

Block programming also works well with a '24-hour' programming strategy. Both designs target new audiences. The access world knows well the difficulty of competing with commercial and professional shows. Arguably, "prime time" is the worst time an access show can be scheduled, given the competition and ingrained viewer habits. Depending on how much programming you have to fill your channel(s), it makes sense to rotate plays over the 24-hour period, attempting to capture several different audiences throughout the day.

For example, if you average eight hours each day of original first-time programming, why not create a rotation where each show repeats every eight hours for one day? This fills the channel on a 24-hour basis, creates a simple programming paradigm for the over-stressed programming staff (cut and paste the schedule into subsequent rotations), and maximizes the opportunity for viewers to surf into an unknown program they really would benefit from seeing. For those facilities fortunate to have Facil access management software, a few simple keyboard strokes makes it happen.

The concept of targeting your audience is hardly new, nor unique to access TV. In particular, George Stoney has always encouraged us to find those who need to see our shows and to give them that opportunity, and he is constantly making those connections with his bag of tapes. George also speaks eloquently about the fact that the channels are not necessarily the best way to accomplish that objective. Showing a program at an organizing meeting, in a health clinic, or in the comfortable space of a living room on a VCR can be a much more effective presentation and better demonstrate the true power of the medium with which we work.

Looking back to the origins of the access movement, George has many examples of the particular effectiveness of sharing tapes in ways other than on cable channels. When local channels were not even available, many access pioneers still made effective use of portable video technology to communicate ideas and build communities of interest. While we remain committed to placing content on our channels, we can benefit from taking a step back to see how reaching other audiences can enhance our underlying mission. In addition to finding those groups and individuals that can benefit from seeing specific shows, we can find other distribution outlets. Some centers (particularly government access organizations) place copies of shows in local libraries, so anyone can check them out for many years. Some programs can be placed in schools or educational media centers. I have even heard of cases where tapes were made available through independent video stores.

If we truly value free expression, we must provide support for its being heard! Otherwise it feels like having a relationship with someone we are not quite prepared to take home to Mama!

— Paul Congo

RIF Exchange Season III continues it's third season of FREE programming...available to you!

RIF Exchange is a LIVE, one-hour magazine style program that keeps teachers, parents, volunteers, and the community informed about the latest developments in children's and family literacy.

Schedule

Show 304: Nonfiction: Reading to Learn Rebroadcast	February 6, 2002 February 11, 2002	6:30-7:30 p.m. ET 12:00-1:00 p.m. ET
Show 305: Older Students and Literacy Rebroadcast	March 6, 2002 March 11, 2002	6:30-7:30 p.m. ET 12:00-1:00 p.m. ET
Show 306: Sharing and Extending Books Rebroadcast	April 10, 2002 April 15, 2002	6:30-7:30 p.m. ET 12:00-1:00 p.m. ET



More shows to come this spring...stay tuned!

Ten RIF Exchange programs were produced in Seasons I and II and are available on videotape

A Service of Reading Is Fundamental, Inc. For more information, please contact RIFNet at (800) 590-0041 or visit us at www.rifnet.org



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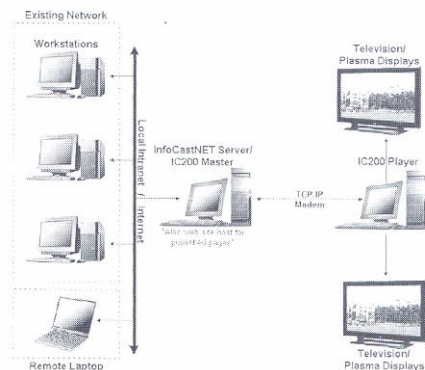
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CastNET



CastNET manages input from multiple authorized users. Using the company Intranet or the internet to create and distribute content to the web site, desktops, kiosks, televisions, and plasma displays

Who's Watching?

RE-ENVISIONING THE ACCESS AUDIENCE

BY BARBARA POPOVIC

Who's watching? It's the million-dollar question. Answering it requires sophistication, finesse, boldness, a cocktail of all the facts you can gather, and chutzpah. After giving it your best shot, you get more questions, rapid fire. What EXACTLY is the demographic make up of your viewership? Do you know how many people watch at a particular time? Can you tell who watches what?

People ask about the audience for Public, Educational and Government access (PEG) as a baseline form of proof of performance, i.e. if people watch, there must be something worth watching. There is no automatic acceptance factor for PEG. If you want to make a PEG believer out of that client, funder, supporter, etc, then you have to prove it, prove it, prove it.

The problem is that since the advent of the remote, nailing down firm audience statistics is about as simple as herding cats. Ratings never prove to be much of a measure for smaller television operations, including PBS by the way, because the audience is too small, too local, too fragmented to measure.

SO...let's take a breather from the numbers game and look at this a different way. Remember that when you scratch the surface of audience, you get people. People with needs just like you and me.

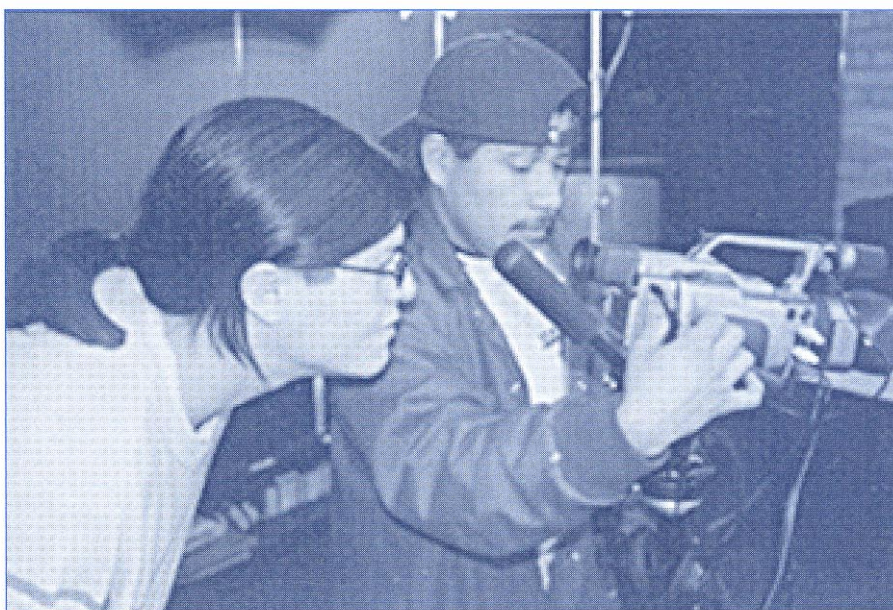
The person asking you the "Who's watching?" question is a person. Listen to them. What are their concerns? What are they trying to accomplish? Maybe it's a funder focused on community capacity building, or a local writer looking for the untold neighborhood story, or a prospective client skeptical about PEG because, after all, who watches? Listen to them. And determine whether there is a point at which the services that you provide intersect with the needs or concerns that they are expressing. Leading with your mission opens up new opportunities for attracting audience.

Just this year a skeptical (and vocal) peer from the media arts community became an enthusiastic promoter of Chicago Access Network Television ("CAN TV") after years of hedging about the value of public access. Being a dyed-in-the-wool print guy he just never really believed our pitch. This past year he started doing a show in partnership with CAN TV. In the program he interviews local nonprofit representatives that tell the oft-neglected stories of Chicago's neighborhoods. He now gets feedback from his funders and board members, and is experiencing serendipitous "we

benefited from using PEG access. If the access center is doing its job and meeting the needs of the local community, you will have a growing number of people telling those stories.

Audience Measures

Still, you say, when we get the question about audience, don't we need some statistical information to back up our position? Certainly, the point here is not to side step the need to survey and gather what facts we can about the work of our centers. At CAN TV, when possible, we track the actual results that groups get from use of our services (See HELPING



CAN TV's Alfonso Soto (left) teaches a portable and editing video class at Erie Neighborhood House to build the capacity of the group to cover its own events.

saw you on TV" remarks from neighbors, people in the grocery store, and clients. He has vocally and enthusiastically joined the ranks of the access converted.

I'm sure anyone reading this article who runs an access center can list people you would love to see joining the ranks of PEG believers. All of a sudden the hard-hitting questions about audience slide away and the same people are excitedly telling you about all the people who stopped them to say they saw them on TV, or how a group they work with has

NONPROFITS HELP PEOPLE on page 30.) We also strategically use surveys to help measure success in achieving mission.

A few years back in Chicago, we surveyed both residents and nonprofit executive directors to measure awareness and value of CAN TV. We found out that one in two cable viewers in Chicago watch CAN TV, 92 percent of Chicagoans see CAN TV as valuable to the community, and eight out of 10 nonprofit executive directors are aware of CAN TV. The same survey told us that less than five percent

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Community Television, La Verne, CA

of Chicago nonprofits and less than 20 percent of Chicago residents feel that commercial television is doing a good job at serving the local community.

It is important in conducting a survey not to get boxed into simply measuring how many eyeballs are on the set during a given timeslot. While this has its value, PEG centers aren't simply selling viewers to advertisers. A survey can provide one method for tracking results, which can be enhanced with qualitative examples of successful uses of PEG channels.

Building Audience

One key to re-envisioning audience is to view audience as a constituency. A PEG center has to be more responsive to the community than is possible by simply relying on the "first come, first served" model of access operation. For years now, CAN TV has been evolving a more proactive model of service to the community that involves distinctive services to nonprofit organizations and partnerships forged with groups throughout Chicago to bring new issues and speakers to the channels. The result of this approach is a growing audience as the network of people concerned with programming on CAN TV continues to widen. The following five examples demonstrate how effective service can both strengthen the mission and work toward building audience.

Extending Audience For Local Events. Events coverage provides an excellent opportunity to increase the audience for PEG channels. Too often, even well planned and promoted community events don't reach the intended audience. While television coverage offers the potential to reach a broader audience, in most cases, the groups holding the events will never take on providing television coverage themselves.

CAN TV covers town hall meetings, lectures, and forums sponsored by nonprofits and insitutions throughout the city. By taking the initiative to produce

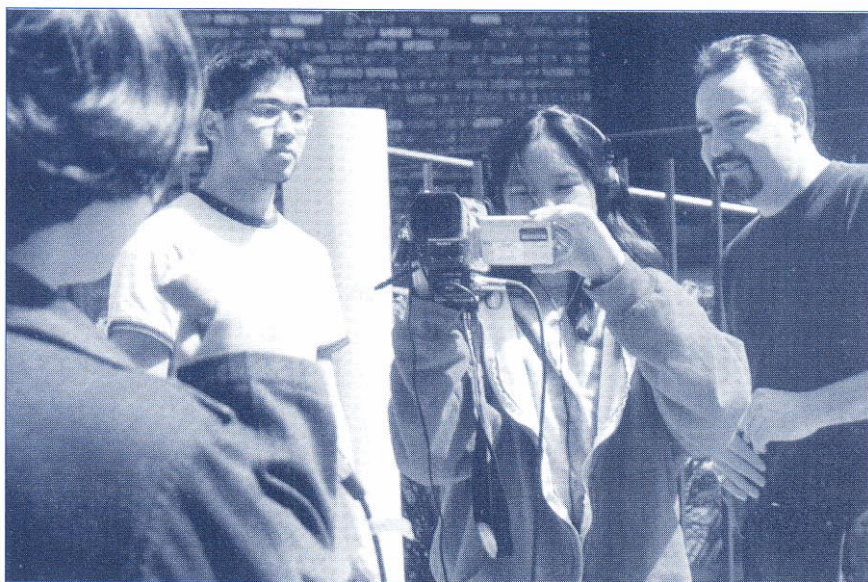
and cablecast events, CAN TV increases the visibility and audience for the event and draws viewers to the channels. This approach has resulted in increased involvement from groups that span a wide range of interests from Chicago Federation of Labor to The City Club of Chicago that has provided a forum for prominent business, civic and governmental leaders in Chicago since 1903.

In 2001, CAN TV covered close to 300 events, extending the audiences for the events to a million potential cable viewers. In the wake of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, CAN TV provided

wide variety of needs. A PEG center can be positioned to act as a clearinghouse of information connecting the nonprofit community with people in need of services. Whether it's a college recruiter, a jobs training group, or a health educator, CAN TV provides low cost, easy-to-use services to Chicago's nonprofit community. CAN TV gains audience and increases its value to the community as its channels gain recognition for helping people find work, housing, and health care.

Rolanda Flynn, project coordinator for Rush University Hypertension Center, uses CAN TV to recruit people for med-

ical trials related to health issues such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and prostate cancer. This year one particular trial was challenging because the center was recruiting older Americans with hypertension who are not on medication. They did a direct mail campaign, mailing 6,000 letters during the same month that they placed a recruitment message on CAN TV. According to Rolanda, more people were recruited from the CAN TV message than from any other method that



CAN TV's Chris Wilkinson (from right) teaches video production to Lizelle Din, Michael Barin, and Jennifer Asidao of the League of Filipino Students.

coverage of 25 town hall meetings and other related events hosted by universities, museums and organizations such as the Arab American Action Network and Chicago Council on Foreign Relations.

Earlier in the year, in response to coverage of a conference featuring Studs Terkel as keynote speaker, Philip Cronce of Chicago State University thanked CAN TV as follows: "Without a doubt, your viewers and the larger community were offered an excellent opportunity to increase their knowledge and understanding of the oral history of Chicago, the civil rights movement, its antecedents and contemporary significance from someone who lived through this period in solidarity with the working class, the ordinary, the poor and urban American."

Helping Nonprofits Help People. Any audience is made up of people with a

they used.

This type of measurable result from use of a public access channel helps to quantify audience. PEG staff can encourage clients to track their results during the time they use a PEG service. The simplest tracking device is for groups to ask callers where they got the information and then to do a comparison of calls received from different sources—direct mail, word of mouth, PEG channel, etc. PEG staff can then get letters or testimonials from clients about their results.

Letters files at CAN TV reflect some impressive results on the letterhead of organizations from throughout the city. Chicago Block Club Association reported their phone calls quadrupling after using CAN TV to increase awareness of their services. Accion Chicago wrote to say that CAN TV provides 70 percent of their TV referrals to their small business lend-

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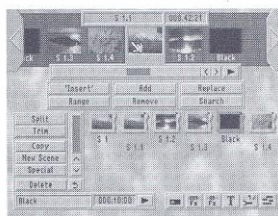
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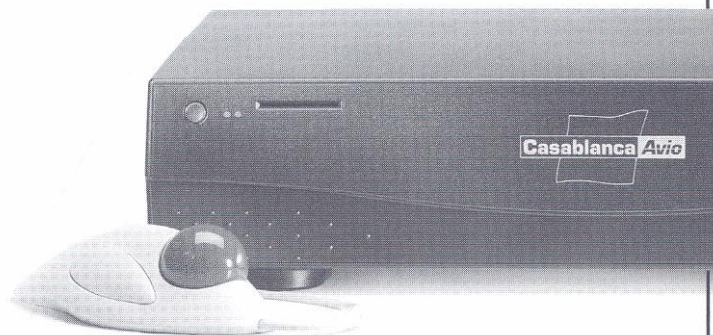
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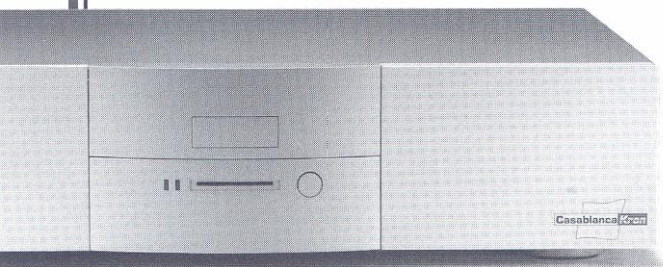
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ing program. These letters can be shared with decision-makers, in organizational publications and on the web.

(For more information on CAN TV's nonprofit services, see *Nonprofits and Public Access: The Chicago Model*, cantv.org/npoacm.htm.)

Diversifying Audience. PEG audiences are also potential PEG users. It's not uncommon at CAN TV to meet people who have come in because they felt "invited" by people or programs that they saw on the channels. An even more consistent method for bringing people to CAN TV is word of mouth. People involve other people whom they know. In a city as diverse and segregated as Chicago, this can result in a client base that is less diverse than the city. In 2001, CAN TV's board and staff set goals to increase the geographic, demographic and issue-based diversity of our programming.

One method for meeting those goals was the initiation of CAN TV's *Community Forum* program, which introduces area nonprofits to CAN TV. The program is strategically booked to diversify groups and issues presented on CAN TV. With new groups and issues come potential new audiences.

Jose and Wanda Avila founded La Familia Unida, an organization devoted to violence prevention in Chicago's predominantly Latino Little Village neighborhood where they live and work. The court system routes domestic violence offenders to them for counseling. They work with parents and youth to educate them about alternatives to violence. This summer, the Avilas appeared on *Community Forum*. It was the first time La Familia Unida had a presence on CAN TV.

Following the cablecast of the program, which was entirely in Spanish, Jose said, "To our surprise, many people have said they have seen us on TV...probation officers have seen the show...a professor from the Adler School of Professional Psychology saw the show. The number of clients have increased."

Two teens hanging out in front of the Avilas' house called out in recognition one day when they saw Jose, "Hey man, I saw you on TV." Wanda asked, "What did you think?" The young man replied..."Straight man, really straight."

Zeroing In—Communities of Interest. Scratch the surface of any community and you get myriad communities of interest. Whether it is animal lovers or



José Avila of La Familia Unida appeared on CAN TV's *Community Forum* program to discuss his group's psychological and abuse counseling and parenting education programs for Latinos.

working moms, people have concerns that link directly to others in their group. In building on its goals to increase diversity, CAN TV has tapped some significant communities of interest in Chicago, increasing the potential to attract new audiences to CAN TV channels.

For 10 years, Bill Wildt, producer of *Motorsports Unlimited*, has produced coverage of Chicagoland Toys for Tots parade for cablecast on CAN TV. This year was the biggest ever with 30,000 bikers stretching 15 miles, collecting toys for distribution in hospitals, orphanages and Chicago's most impoverished neighborhoods. With the rapid growth of the parade came the concern that residents might focus on the nuisance factor.

Bill encouraged the Toys for Tots organizers to use CAN TV in the weeks leading up to the parade to educate residents about the purpose of the parade, how to participate, how to contribute, and how to avoid any inconvenience during the two-and-a-half hours of the event. The live call-in program has gained viewers from participants and recipients alike. One father called to say that the visit from Toys for Tots to his hospitalized son last year brightened the holiday for the whole family.

Providing Opportunities for Audience Participation. Public participation is rarely encouraged in the political arena. If Chicago is indicative of most cities, even determining the date of a public hearing can be a research project. To best serve its community, every PEG

center should have strategies for engaging its audience in dialogue with elected officials.

CAN TV's *Political Forum* program has been bringing local aldermen, state and federal representatives to the Chicago viewing audience for 10 years with a live, call-in format. Viewers are able to call with their questions and local politicians engage in the equivalent of weekly, citywide electronic office hours. Not only has awareness of the program grown but so has CAN TV's political capital. On the floor of city council one day when discussing CAN TV and its contributions, nine aldermen stood to testify, each one topping the other as they jokingly argued about who gets the most phone calls on *Political Forum*. The mayor pro tem finally pulled rank, getting in the last word.

Mission Leads, Audience Follows

In closing, it's important to re-envision audience by leading with your mission. Evaluate the effectiveness of your center in meeting community needs. Be on the lookout for gaps in service, sluggish outreach, monopolization of resources by the few, and lack of a diversity of participants. Make the changes that are necessary to address these problems. Make sure that solid, useful services, accessible technology, and competent staff are in place to build a viable, credible reputation for your center as an organization that effectively serves the community. Commercial television is not viewed as providing this service. PEG has every opportunity to do so. When you lead with mission, audience follows.

Barbara Popovic is executive director of Chicago Access Network Television. (CAN TV), 322 S. Green Street, Chicago, IL 60607-3544, telephone 312.738.2519 or email popovicb@cantv.org

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Updated... 8/30/2000 12:03 pm | Legend: None Reserved Some Reserved All Reserved Overbooked

	Edit 1 VHS	Edit 2 VHS	Edit 3 Hi8	Edit 4 Hi8	Studio	Camcorder T450
9/20 8:00 a	1	1	1	1	1	4
9/20 8:30 a	Burstein, Dan	1	1	1	1	4
9/20 9:00 a	Burstein, Dan	1	Thatcher, Becky	1	1	3
9/20 9:30 a	Burstein, Dan	1	Thatcher, Becky	1	1	3
9/20 10:00 a	Burstein, Dan	Montague, Mickey, J	Thatcher, Becky	1	1	3
9/20 10:30 a	Burstein, Dan	Montague, Mickey, J	Thatcher, Becky	1	Anthony, Susan B.	3
9/20 11:00 a	Burstein, Dan	Montague, Mickey, J	Thatcher, Becky	Bellewether, Michell	Anthony, Susan B.	1
9/20 11:30 a	Burstein, Dan	Montague, Mickey, J	Thatcher, Becky	Bellewether, Michell	Anthony, Susan B.	1
9/20 12:00 p	Burstein, Dan	Mont.				
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9/20 1:00 p	Burstein, Dan					
9/20 1:30 p	1					
9/20 2:00 p	Forrest, Tiger					
9/20 2:30 p	Forrest, Tiger	K				
9/20 3:00 p	Forrest, Tiger	K				
9/20 3:30 p	Forrest, Tiger	K				
9/20 4:00 p	Forrest, Tiger	K				
9/20 4:30 p	Forrest, Tiger	K				
9/20 5:00 p	1	K				
9/20 5:30 p	1	K				
9/20 6:00 p	1	K				
9/20 6:30 p	1	K				
9/20 7:00 p	1	K				
9/20 7:30 p	1					

Program Schedule

Criteria... Channel X 62 | Date X 05/20/00 19:00:00 to X 08/31/00 0:00:00 | Show Open Full Hold

Project ID X | Program ID X | Found 2437 | Legend Open Full Project Hold | Edit Block

Channel	Start	Length	Proj ID	Project Title	Prog ID	Episode	Program Title	AVF
62	Sat 05/20/00 20:00:00	0:27:24	1880	Arizona's People	9426	0	Arizona's People	
62	Sat 05/20/00 20:27:24	0:01:22	1168	Re-enactment	5827	545	B of A Robbery	
62	Sat 05/20/00 20:28:46	0:01:14	1671	Program Guide	8422	0	Program Guide	
62	Sat 05/20/00 20:30:00	0:30:00	2620	Harvest Time	17163	67	Harvest Time	
62	Sat 05/20/00 21:00:00	0:58:16	3657	Korean Christian Television of /	23735	11	Korean Christian Television of AZ	
62	Sat 05/20/00 21:58:16	0:01:44	1866	Access Information	9200	0	Access Information	
62	Sat 05/20/00 22:00:00	1:00:00	3687	Noche de Sonora				
62	Sat 05/20/00 23:00:00	1:00:00	257	Arizona Pastimes	2211	194	Crisis in the Classroom	
62	Sun 05/21/00 0:00:00	1:00:00	220	Forbidden Zone, The				
62	Sun 05/21/00 1:00:00	1:00:00	1877	Rock Club Rising	9314	167	Firecreek, innuendo, europa, war	
62	Sun 05/21/00 2:00:00	4:59:00	3006	Classic Arts Showcase				
62	Sun 05/21/00 6:59:00	0:01:00	1866	Access Information	9200	0	Access Information	
62	Sun 05/21/00 7:00:00	0:59:23	3746	DNA (Deliverance Now and Aft	24002	2	DNA (Deliverance Now and Aft	
62	Sun 05/21/00 7:59:23	1:00:00	3006	Classic Arts Showcase				
62	Sun 05/21/00 8:59:23	0:00:37	1866	Access Information	9200	0	Access Information	
62	Sun 05/21/00 9:00:00	1:59:35	2862	United Gospel Fellowship Hour	18694	112	112	
62	Sun 05/21/00 10:59:35	0:00:25	1866	Access Information	9200	0	Access Information	
62	Sun 05/21/00 11:00:00	0:58:50	3199	Living in the Faith Zone	21878	72	Living in the Faith Zone	
62	Sun 05/21/00 11:58:50	0:01:10	1866	Access Information	9200	0	Access Information	

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A New Kind of Provider Can Provide a New Kind of Access for Audiences

BY BRENDA J. TRAINOR

In the fall of 2001, a group of 13 young companies announced the formation of the Broadband Service Providers Association (BSPA), a coalition of companies unlike anything that community access producers and local franchise authorities are used to seeing. These new kinds of providers can offer resources and commitments for Public, Educational, and Government access that is equivalent to or better than those of the current cable television franchisee. The BSPA companies also provide a new opportunity to analyze how community members utilize different kinds of information tools in their neighborhoods.

The members of the BSPA offer more than just cable television service. Some operate as open video service providers, others as standard cable television franchisees. In addition to video channels, these companies also offer residential voice and data services, typically in a bundled package, to realize significant cost-savings. In short, these companies offer full-service telecommunications to the home; essentially each is an information utility that combines the best of an internet service provider, a telephone company and a cable company into a single, integrated service for residents. The logo for Altrio Communications, for example, touts "One Connection. Infinite Possibilities" as a demonstration of the wide range of available services and the simplicity of a single wire, and a single bill, into the home. Audience convenience is key.

These new integrated telecommunications companies present new opportunities for community leaders who are responsible for PEG services—these are the leaders who care about involving the audiences of different kinds of community information services into a more accessible and integrated community communications system. More opportunities exist to market an independent community voice, your favorite PEG access channel, across various platforms

to the recipients of different services. The key, of course, is to facilitate the entry of these new companies into the community and to encourage competition for services and expansion of access resources.

The BSPA members offer the first true chance for the effective competition in telephone and cable service that was envisioned with the passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996. In an era of increasing corporate consolidation of video and voice services, these companies are an important component in communities that value alternatives and competition.

The principles of economics dictate, at least for now, that these competitive providers locate in fairly dense urban areas, typically the market where access managers have established facilities, operations, and community cultures conducive to effective participation on the established cable system.

What happens when competition comes to town?

There are distinct advantages from the arrival of a competitive provider to PEG services managed by a franchising authority, a school district or a non-profit corporation. In communities where the incumbent cable company controls access, the transition may not be so simple.

Let's look at both situations: In cases where access services are the responsibility, not of the local franchise authority or its designee, but have remained within the control of the

incumbent cable operator, the transition to a two-provider environment can be challenging. Most incumbent providers will be unwilling to welcome the participation of a new video carrier and competitor. Interconnection of the channels on to each of the two systems might be difficult, from both the technical as well as the competitive aspect. In such cir-



'...these companies offer full-service telecommunications to the home; essentially each is an information utility that combines the best of an internet service provider, a telephone company and a cable company into a single, integrated service for residents.'

cumstances, the local franchising authority typically has to assume a stronger exercise of control and take responsibility for the management and operation of all access services, thereby assuring cooperation between the two corporate distributors of the community's important channels. Such a role is consistent with a vision of access as being guided by the community, not simply corporate interests.

In the second and more likely situation, the local franchise authority has defined capital obligations and possibly

operating requirements in its cable television franchise to be provided by the cable television company. These obligations generally take the form of cash or equipment grants to an access manager for an existing production facility managed either singly or in combination by a local government, an educational institution, and/or a non-profit corporation. In these circumstances, the new provider matches the capital obligations on a cost-per-subscriber basis until such time as the equivalent dollar value is achieved.

The reason that the cost-per-subscriber comparison is important is because such a calculation method balances out the inherent market inequities that result when a new provider enters a mature and established market, and in many cases where the franchise for new construction is compared to an already renewed franchise. With no subscribers, a new company building out a new network, yet operating against an established, and probably renewed franchisee, needs to be efficient in its expenditure of funds. Until the new system is built out, the equivalence of its dollars-spent per viewers-reached needs to be balanced. The cost-per-subscriber formula accomplishes this goal and helps to equalize the obligations of both providers consistent with their level of reach within a franchise area. Such obligations help to equalize the costs across all subscribers' bills in an equitable manner.

Other approaches don't realize the benefits of such a cost-per-subscriber calculation. For example, it could also be argued that the obligations of the incumbent cable franchisee were designed to meet community needs. If a community made such a statement and satisfied their needs through franchise requirements, it could be argued that any future franchisee would be obligated to satisfy that same previously stated need. In effect, a new provider would pay back the incumbent operator for the payments already made. The community, in such a scenario, would see no increase in benefits, but would split the obligation from each of the two providers.

But defining community need in light of a single provider yields a different result than describing it from a two-provider reality. What experience has shown is that in markets where hard-line

video competition thrives, there are greater total numbers of subscribers to the combination of services. Thus, competition not only improves the reach of PEG access, but the need for services to reach both new audience members and programming contributors. In a two-provider reality, the needs do change, and local franchising authorities that recognize this reality serve to benefit from effective negotiations with competitive service providers.

What can we learn from these scenarios?

PEG access services continue to be important components of local community video networks, and competitive providers see great value in supporting those local services described in franchise documents. PEG access services are important services that are unavailable through anything other than local, land-line networks. As such they create an important distinction between local community video networks and satellite-delivered services that lack the value of local services—both PEG access channels as well as the full complement of broadcast services. PEG access services are important components of community networks, and in the more sophisticated communities, they can be important gateways to other community sources of information, including Internet-based services such as websites and video-

streaming libraries. It is through the realization of such full-service community networking applications, that utilize video, data, and voice, where integrated service providers will be able to truly demonstrate to a growing number of audience members the advantage of using different technologies.

New competitive providers can be important allies to community access service providers and local franchise authorities by bringing advanced and integrated applications to a new level of reality. The evolution to these advanced and integrated services will require understanding and responsibility from both the providers and local franchise authorities. This new industry is looking forward to developing responsible relationships and realizing new approaches to community communications—reaching more audience members, new community organizations and inspiring “infinite possibilities.”

Brenda J. Trainor is vice president, public policy for Altrio Communications, Inc. a Los Angeles-based integrated telecommunications services provider. She worked on her first access production in 1976 in East Lansing, Michigan and has been active in local telecommunications initiatives since then working extensively for and with local franchising authorities across the nation, primarily in the southwest. Email: trainorb@altrio.net

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COMMUNITY MEDIA REVIEW

From Access to Impact

The spring issue of CMR will feature articles from individuals and organizations that have made a critical difference in their community through social applications of information technology. We will have a profile on the international winner of the best social application as determined by the Association for Progressive Communications (www.apc.org). The profile is of a group of girls in a poor village in India who use video to 'rock the casbah.' Other features will shed light on media for migrants in Europe, wireless Internet projects closing the digital divide, and software for online fund development.

Watch for *From Access to Impact* in April 2002.

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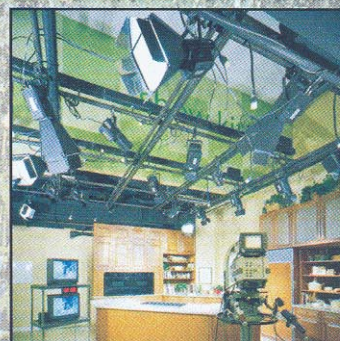
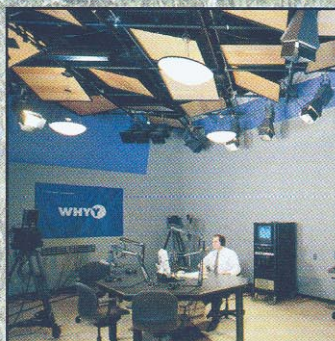
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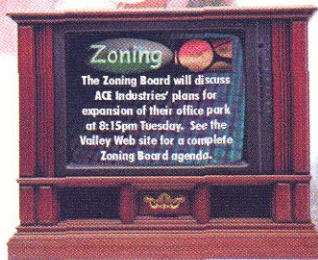
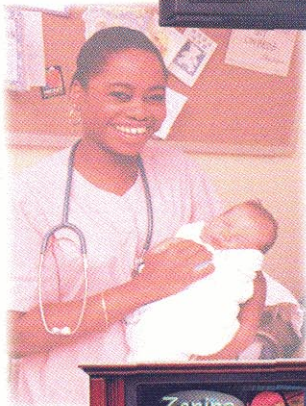


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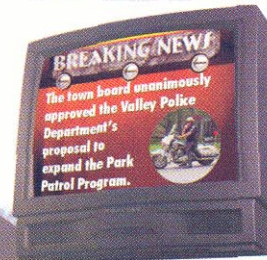
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